



Sunday December 15, 2019

Dear Shelton Academy families,

On December 1, Pope Francis visited Greccio, Italy, where almost 800 years ago St. Francis of Assisi had the idea to reenact the scene of Christ's birth in Bethlehem – the first Nativity scene. The pope's short journey to Greccio culminated in his signing of a new apostolic letter, *Admirable Signum* (<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2019/12/01/0953/01938.html#en>), on the meaning and importance of the Nativity scene. He told the crowd gathered in Greccio that the scene of Baby Jesus in the manger, surrounded by his Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and others, should serve as a reminder to the constant presence of Christ in our lives, which began with the Incarnation. "God loves us to the point of sharing our humanity and our lives", Pope Francis said, "He never leaves us alone".

The Nativity scene is a wonderful family tradition. I have fond memories of the years growing up at home with my siblings... Some "Navidades" we had an Advent calendar and each day we would open one little window on it, some years we decorated a tree, but always at Christmas we built a wonderful "Nacimiento". We would work together to set it up and each of us had a figurine of a little sheep; every evening during Advent we gathered around the scene and moved our sheep one step closer to the manger. And as we did these things we always listened to Christmas carols. At home we had a "tocadiscos" and a bunch of "LPs" and "45s" with "villancicos populares" (ask your parents about those extinct devices); we all had our favorites and also the ones we sang along with the music. Today, as I write these lines to you I am listening to the Christmas carols that my wife is playing out loud in our living room; she is using the family TV and something called "spotify" (ask your children about this ☺). Each family is different and your memories of Christmas traditions may involve baking cookies, visiting relatives, outdoors decorating, or even trips to visit the family.

Family traditions are important and Christmas is a great opportunity to get them started. This year at Shelton Academy we are going to sing Christmas carols together, as a family, and we hope that this event will continue throughout the years and become a school tradition. You can find the information about our Christmas Carols Family Festival, and about other events, on this Christmas edition of the Family Notes.

- **Preschool Christmas Pageant:** our preschool students are offering a performance of the Christmas story this coming Wednesday in our Center Stage at the Piazza, and all preschool families are invited to attend. Show times are:
 - PreK 3: 8:45
 - PreK 4: 10:30
- **Christmas Carols Family Festival:** this Thursday December 19, at 9:00 am, we invite you to sing along with your children and the faculty on a Christmas Carols Festival. This will be a time to come together as a family and sing to the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The students gather in the Piazza, and the parents on the second floor balcony; each grade will lead us in singing a different Christmas song and we will join them with our voices in Christmas celebration. This is a new tradition at Shelton and we hope to sing together for years to come.

Important things to know about the Festival:

- Students come in Formal Uniform on Thursday for the Christmas Festival; those that have P. E. class can bring a gym bag with clothes to change for P.E. class after the caroling.
 - There will be Valet Parking provided for parents attending the Christmas Festival.
 - As you enter the school you will receive a booklet with the program for the festival but also the lyrics for each one of the carols.
 - For your planning purposes the Festival starts at 9:00 and should be about one hour long.
 - After the singing we will offer a light reception for parents in our Conference Room; stay after the carols to cheer for the Christmas season with other families at Shelton Academy.
- **Christmas Celebration and Patinata:** this Friday is our last day of school before the Christmas break and we have planned a morning of activities and celebrations for the students.

Important considerations about Friday:

- Students can come to school in their most festive “Christmas Spirited” attire; this is the day to wear their red and green outfits, they Santa’s hats or elf inspired shirts, and/or anything “chrismassy” of their like. Students can also wear jeans and a t-shirt or sweatshirt in holiday colors. But please always in good taste and school appropriate elements of clothing. Lastly, please, no pajamas on Friday.

- In the morning the students will participate in different activities with their Shelton Houses, including the opening of the school piñatas, a Christmas Mexican tradition newly incorporated to life at Shelton.
 - After the House activities there will be a time for class Christmas parties and gift exchange in each grade homeroom.
 - Friday is a noon release day and school ends at 12:00 noon, at which time the Christmas break starts.
- **Upcoming Events:**
 - Wednesday December 18: Preschool Christmas Pageant.
 - Thursday December 19: Christmas Carols Family Festival.
 - Friday December 20: Christmas Patinata day, noon release.
 - Monday January 6: Teacher Planning Day.
 - Tuesday January 7: Classes resume.

This past Friday we celebrated our faculty and staff Christmas party and we had a great time together. Before our meal Mr. Carlos Padula, Chairman of the Board at Shelton Academy, shared a few words about the meaning of Christmas and about Shelton; part of his message was along the lines of what Pope Francis says in his apostolic letter *Admirable Signum*, that Jesus came because of his love for us, and that He continues to remain with us. In just ten days we celebrate the coming of Jesus and, as I did with the faculty and staff on Friday, I would like to share my wish list with you today. Just three things: first of all please rest, use the two-week break to rest from five great months of school and to recharge for the next five; secondly, pray, ask Baby Jesus many good things for you, for your family, and for Shelton Academy, please continue to pray for the school; and lastly, celebrate! Of course! The coming of Our Lord is always a time to rejoice in our many blessings.

With my best wishes to you and your family, Merry Christmas!

Juan Mata
Headmaster