

# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

happy 2022

December 18, 2021



## voices on the 37

### *The Montebello Voice uncut, uncensored, unofficial*

#### Got a story?

2021 has been a mixed bag of collective hope and despair. As we prepare for another journey around the Sun in 2022, let's take time to share any anecdotes, stories about life in 2021. Humor would be especially appreciated. Don't be shy. — *Azita Mashayekhi* 📧

#### Don't get buyer's remorse

I have a friend who paid \$13,000 to a Montebello contractor for renovation work. The workers came two months late without notice and failed to do what was in the contract. Whether she will get her money back could be problematic.

I never, never, never use a physician, service or contractor without consulting the ratings in Consumers Checkbook DC <https://www.checkbook.org/washington-area/>. I found the top



hip replacement surgeon in the area and I am able to jog and ski with no problem. The cost of the online service is minimal. While some rating services can be skewed, this has enough raters that it is extremely reliable.

One of the things that saddens me is knowing that some of my neighbors who don't have money to throw away are using contractors that have been dinged for poor service, outrageous prices, or both.

If you think I am trying to get you to sign up, you are right. The more members, the more raters and the more accurate the ratings. — *John R. Powers* 📧

The Montebello Voice

#### The web show

"Stop showing! Stand in line!"

Said the spider.

"If you wish to see my web,

You must pay me a fee."

So they all stood in line

To see the spider's web —

Some flies,

Two moths and a bee.

(And the spider had a hunch

That they'd stick around for lunch.)

— *Carole Mohr*

#### The loo with a view

My Parisian friend Jean would have had big problems with the current spate of Charmin commercials, and their assertions of thoroughness in cleaning. I knew Jean when he was at MIT doing graduate work. He never could resign himself to an America with no bidets. From my travels in France I understood what was troubling him.

Jean spoke of toilet paper with contempt. "Only smears it around." But he was every bit the diplomat when it came to describing the consequences of a reliance on paper. "In Italy, where everyone eats garlic, nobody's breath smells of garlic." Then he would stop.

The Japanese are, of course, ahead of everyone else. Seventy percent of private homes there have bathrooms with a fixture that allows one to wash up without the need to move to a separate fixture, as with the bidet.

In my Larousse, the first meaning for "bidet" is identical to ours, but there is a second: "nag." — *Richard Titus* 📧



#### Cockroach math

The roach can't add, but he's a good multiplier.

He begins with just two and then goes much higher.

He needs only a mate and a few bits of food

To multiply into a multitude.

There just isn't enough of extermination

To divide or subtract his multiplication.

— *Carole Mohr*



Cover photo by *Christine Winter*, Honorable Mention winner

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an independent gazette  
Alexandria, Virginia

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# Nature Photo contest winners announced in Zoom ceremony

By Rebecca McNeely, Grounds Committee

Among the 30 residents who submitted images to the contest, 17 were first-time participants who entered for the first time. The top three winners received cash prizes of \$100, \$75 and \$50 respectively.

First Place went to Stephen Valdivia, Second Place to Laurie Denton, and Third Place to Moira Alice Kelley.

The presentation featured profes-

sional photographer Michael Oberman, who selected the winners from among the 101 entries, 9 of whom were children. Each of the recipients

of the top prizes and honorable mentions were given the opportunity to discuss their photographs and to hear critiques from Oberman. For example, about Christine Winter's honorable mention photo [cover image] of animal tracks on fungus, he said, "There was an air of mystery. This photo was different from everything else in the contest."

Regarding Laurie Denton's photo, he said, "I was wowed by this, a very

neat photo."

In a wide-ranging discussion about the art of photography, residents noted that the focus on nature here was helpful. "My camera and the Montebello grounds were two life savers for me during the pandemic," said Dian McDonald, who took home an honorable mention.

Joel Miller, an award winner in previous years said, "I've learned a lot about nature since coming to Montebello."

As Oberman said, "Anyone who gets out in nature with a camera, is a winner." Each of the award winners will receive a mounted 11 x 14 print of their photograph. These, along with additional submissions, will be exhibited in the temporary Montebello Café from January until March.

Meanwhile, the 101 beautiful photographs and a video of the awards presentation can be seen at [montebellogrounds.com](http://montebellogrounds.com).



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## Friends host kitten shower to welcome Felix III

By Mary Quinn

**M**y friends here, Cassandra Bradley and Yo Frommer, at Montebello hosted a surprise kitten shower for Felix III! I was literally showered with a drinking fountain, a naturally heated blanket, lots of toys, a place mat that says Felix III, Shedmaster Brush, PETCO Certificate, a Kitten on Board sign for when we pick him up early 2022, and a framed photo of him taken by the breeder on November 17, my birthday.

The event was catered by the lovely Montebello Café and chef José served chicken salad, shrimp salad, three-bean salad, fruit salad, egg salad, and green salad, all personally prepared and delivered to this epic event.

I call this event epic because never in the history of Montebello has there been a kitten shower.

Felix III was born October 1st at RP Cathouse Maine Coon Cattery located in Annapolis.

After losing Felix II to kidney failure on February 6, 2020, it took a

while for me to be ready for Felix III. In September 2020 I was led by friends and guides to join a Facebook group called RP Cathouse Maine Coons. I was reluctant at first, but kept being encouraged. When I joined, I got into

tabby Maine Coons. Stella sent me three photos and number three was clearly Felix III.

Interestingly enough, 15 years ago, Felix II was born (July 7, 2006) and the breeder (Makanacoon Cattery in Virginia Beach) sent me three pictures of the three boys that were classic tabby Maine Coons. I picked out kitten number three, which was Felix II.

Felix III will become a Montebello resident sometime in early 2022. When we pick him up and bring him home, the Kitten on Board sign will be displayed in my Honda's right back window. All of my neighbors and guards will soon see me wheeling him to the mobile groomer. Please stop by and I will introduce you to Felix III.

■



Photos by Dian McDonald



the groove of this group. Although I was still grieving over Felix II, I got the courage to call the breeder, Stella, and told her the story of Felix I, Felix II, and that there will be a Felix III per my dreams. I described his coloring to Stella and placed my order for Felix III. I let Stella know that he will be born when he knows I am ready and will love him as Felix III.

Approximately a year later, I got the word that Felix III has been born, and it is a litter of five kittens, three of whom are boys, and they are warm brown



# Christmas legends, symbols, and traditions

By Raymond Houck

The legends of Christmas are more than just amusing and entertaining; they either convey a strong message or teach us an essential lesson of life. Both ways, they tell us about certain simple yet significant values of life. Children especially can benefit from these tales. The fun and entertaining parts can grab the children's attention, conferring upon them the ethics or morals these legends hold.

Christmas is one of the major festivals celebrated all over the world. Every year, we celebrate Christmas with great displays, panache, and spectacle. The timeless conventions of decorating trees with knick-knacks, singing carols, preparing delicious feasts, and attending Church are inherent through the years.

Christmas is celebrated all around the world on December 25. It is the birth anniversary of Lord Jesus. Many things are associated with Christmas, such as the Christmas tree, the nativity scenes, and the warm fireplace. It is a season of love and warmth. Family and friends celebrate the spirit of Christmas with loads of gifts and lots of Christmas cheer. There are countless Christmas legends, symbols, and traditions; here are just a few of the lesser-known ones.

## Legend of mistletoe

One of the most important symbols of love, of course, is the mistletoe. There are different legends about this plant, and it is held dear by both the Celts and the Norse druids. Mistletoe is also said to have medicinal properties in folklore; in fact, it was used to cure headaches and even toothaches! Many called mistletoe the "golden bough." Kissing under the mistletoe is a widely held practice.

## The legend of the ladybug

According to European folklore, ladybugs symbolize good luck. It was said many years ago that aphids invaded the farmer's grapevines. When the farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary, legend tells us that swarms of tiny red beetles appeared. They proceeded to eat the aphids and save the crops. The farmers called the beetles "ladybugs" in honor of Mary.

## The symbol of the bee

The bee is a symbol of industry, resourcefulness, and prosperity. These tiny creatures demonstrate the success and satisfaction of working together harmoniously to enjoy the sweetness of

the genus Euphorbia was assigned to it, Poinsett's name invariably got connected to the plant. To this day, these bright red flowers are called Poinsettias.

## The legend of tabby cats

Legend tells us that as baby Jesus shivered in the manger on the night He was born, a tiny kitten jumped into his humble crib. Mary touched the little tabby cat to thank it for its gifts of love and warmth, bestowing her initial "M" on its forehead. Since that day, tabby cats have been known for their characteristic "M" on their foreheads, a symbol of gratitude for love so gently given.

## The legend of the rooster

Legend states that the only time the rooster crowed at midnight was the night Jesus was born. In Spanish and Latin American countries, "Misa del Gallo," The Mass of the Rooster, is celebrated at midnight on Christmas Eve. The rooster crowing at dawn each morning symbolizes the daily triumph of light over darkness and the victory of good over evil.

## The tradition of the pickle

Here is a favorite of mine from when I was a young boy and today, in our home.

According to German tradition, the pickle brings good luck. After all the other ornaments are placed on the Christmas tree, the pickle ornament is hidden somewhere within its branches. On Christmas morning, the first child to find the sneaky gherkin is rewarded with an additional gift from St. Nicholas. The pickle tradition encourages youngsters to enjoy the many ornaments on the tree before checking their gifts.

Have a wonderful holiday and celebrate or create your own traditions with those you love. 🍷



life. British farmers believed the bees hummed in honor of the Christ Child born on Christmas Day.

## Poinsettias and Christmas

The U.S. Ambassador to Mexico in the 1800s, Joel Roberts Poinsett, saw the beautiful red flowers and decided to bring a few back to the United States and try to grow them in his greenhouse. Poinsett succeeded in growing these plants and gave them as gifts to his friends, family, and other botanists like himself. He tried to work towards cultivating the plant commercially. Though



## Being St. Nicholas

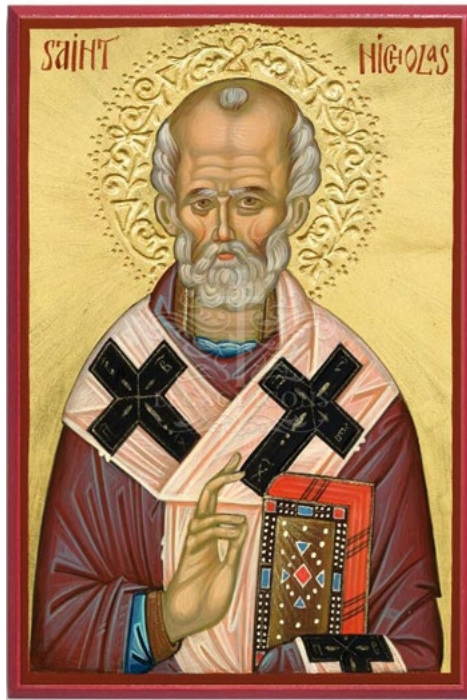
By Raymond Houck

**N**aughty children, pesky Omas (grandmothers), inclement weather, and maintaining a tricky golden book—it is not always easy being Nikolaus!

Saint Nicholas (Nikolaus) Day is on December 6 in Germany, Hungary, and other European countries. His representatives are busy on December 4, 5, 6, and 7 when they visit Kindergartens, playgroups, and elementary schools during the mornings, and in the evenings they call on families at their homes.

The Catholic Church celebrates St. Nicholas's feast day on the anniversary of his death, December 6. The tradition of receiving small gifts from St. Nicholas began with Dutch children, who put out their shoes the night before, so St. Nicholas could leave gifts in them. The story behind the saint, the model for Santa Claus, has a much darker history.

St. Nick's Day is the feast day of St. Nicholas, a 4th-century bishop who is also the patron saint of Russia, Greece, and children, who was thought to bring gifts to good children and lumps of coal to bad children. His legend would eventually be merged with many other nationalities' traditions to become Santa Claus, but St. Nick's Day remains



separate from Christmas in parts of Europe, including Germany.

Angels watch over boys and girls throughout the year to observe if they are good or bad, and they record the children's actions in the "golden book" of St. Nicholas. If chil-

dren are good, the angels put presents and sweets in his sack. They also include a switch for Krampus, a not-so-nice companion of St. Nicholas, to use when punishing the bad ones. Krampus was created as a counterpart to kindly St. Nicholas, who rewarded children with sweets. He is often represented as an older man with a wild shaggy beard, wearing a coat made from pieces of fur, a cape of burlap, and a belt. His face appears blackened with coal dust, and he wears a stocking mask and a helmet with horns.

In the European countries of Germany and Poland, boys have traditionally dressed like bishops and begged alms for the poor. In Poland, children wait for St. Nicholas to come and put a present under their pillows, provided that the children were good during the



year. Children who misbehaved can expect to find a twig or a piece of coal under their pillows. In the Netherlands, Dutch children put out a clog filled with hay and a carrot for Saint Nicholas' horse. On Saint Nicholas Day, gifts are tagged with personal, humorous rhymes written by the sender. In the United States, one custom associated with Saint Nicholas Day is children leaving their shoes in the foyer on Saint Nicholas Eve, hoping that Saint Nicholas will place some coins on the soles.

Have **you** been good this year? 🍪

## Ask an expert

By Bob Shea

In November of 2021, the nation celebrated the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown in Arlington National Cemetery. For many of us, it brought back memories of our first visit to that hallowed spot and the emotions that our visit evoked in our soul.

As a young Army officer stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground in the summer of 1964, a fellow lieutenant and I decided that we should drive to the Army's Personnel Center, then located in the old Hoffman Building along I-495 in Alexandria. It was a time to discuss our future assignments, review our official records, and let our "druthers" be known to the officers who allegedly managed our careers.

We were in our dress tan tropical worsted uniforms of that era. We completed our interviews and were done with our official business by late morning. On a whim, I asked Steve Maggio if he had ever been to Arlington National Cemetery. Neither of us had been there, and with our proximity to the national shrine, we decided to go there before driving back to Aberdeen in his gold-colored Corvair.

We visited John F. Kennedy's grave and then went up the hill to the Tomb of the Unknown. We wanted to witness the changing of the guard, noting on signage that it occurred in the summer on the hour and half hour. We wandered around the site, waiting for the ceremony.

While we were killing time near the Tomb, a little old lady who looked like everyone's grandmother rushed up to

Lieutenant Maggio and me. She was very upset, telling us that she had been there much earlier in the day, and that the same poor young soldier was still on guard in the heat and humidity of the day.

"You've got to do something. That poor soldier needs to get out of the heat," she said.

We realized that, being still in uniform, we represented the Army, and she assumed that we could solve the "problem" that she had identified.

One option was a lengthy explana-



tion that while we were in uniform, we were tourists like everyone else at Arlington that day and had absolutely no connection to the 3rd Infantry and the Tomb guards. We could have further explained that the members of the 3rd Infantry assigned to the tomb detail all looked alike, almost the exact same height, same uniform, close GI haircut, sunglasses. We could have also pointed out the signs giving the ceremony's schedule. But we did not. She was agitated and wanted results. She wanted action now, not long wordy explanations.

A dilemma: tell the truth or a white lie to make her feel better? I chose the latter.

Having earlier seen the signage on the times of the changing of the guard

(which she obviously had not noticed), I looked at my watch. It was 10 minutes before 1 p.m. I replied, "M'am, thank you for your concern. I do appreciate that. If you can give me 10 minutes, I will make sure the young man you are worried about is relieved and given a rest out of the heat."

She was profuse in thanking me, repeating her concern for the young soldier.

Lieutenant Maggio and I moved away from her, looked busy for a couple of minutes, and then, as predicted, the changing of the guard occurred on the hour, exactly 10 minutes later. The grandmother was happy, the guard was off duty, and we had told a white lie to someone's grandmother. She probably went away knowing in her heart that she had done a good deed. She even had a story to tell her friends and family. Despite the white lie, it was a win-win for everyone.

Arlington National Cemetery is an emotional place where we honor those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. In addition to all the emotions it causes me to have when I visit, I cannot hold back a smile, recalling how I thought quickly on my feet and made the gray-haired lady feel good about her actions that day.

When in doubt, ask an "expert" even if he or she really has no real ability to impact on reality. She did, and it worked. 📖



## Ingegerd Olofsdotter, Princess of Sweden

### Irina Anna, the Saint of Novgorod

By Chester Taylor

**A**t the age of 18, Ingegerd was on her way from Sigtuna, Sweden, to the city of Kiev in Kievan Rus to be married to Yaroslav, Grand Prince of Kiev and Novgorod. It was late spring in the year 1019 AD. Her maid, Inga, packed Ingegerd's trunks with dresses, coats, and boots that would be needed there. Ingegerd said her goodbyes to friends and family in Sigtuna. She was both sad to leave and excited to start her new life. Her father Olof, Viking King of Sweden, with his warriors, made ready the longships. He stocked them with food, water, and trading items such as furs, copper goods, and *seljara* (for sealing boats) for trade for silver dirhams and high-quality swords. Ingegerd was accompanied by her mother Estrid and maid Inga. Their course took them due east across the Baltic, with a stop in Gotland, where they did some business at Paviken. Estrid traded for a beautiful silver necklace with mounted milky-white rock crystals for the wedding and a crescent-shaped silver pendant with

a raised rope outline and an inlay of small deep-blue lapis stones.

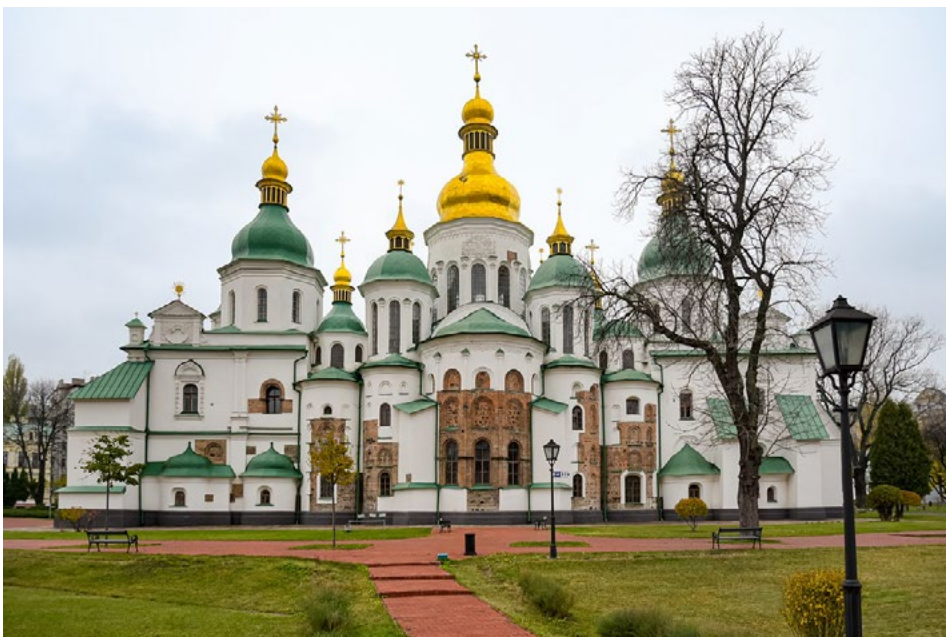
After a day of trading, they had a short sail to Burgsvik to visit with some old friends of Olof's, Ansgar and Catla, who were waiting there. Rarely did they get visitors. The ships were a sight as they sailed into the small safe harbor and pulled right up on the stony beach there. The weather was warm, and wildflowers were in bloom everywhere. Because of the large group, they camped on the beach. Ansgar had been a warrior with Olof and fought in the battle of Svolder. Ansgar had protected Olaf more than once, and Olof did not forget who his friends were. Ansgar had been wounded at Svolder when a battle-axe smashed through his shield and severely cut his left hand. Fortunately, the axe had become lodged in the shield, and Ansgar reached around with his sword and



*Ingegerd Olofsdotter, Princess of Sweden*

stabbed his enemy through the rib cage killing him. Fighting was over for him now and, with his wife Catla, he lived peacefully on Gotland, fishing, farming, and trading silk. They had two girls, Ulvhild, age 16, and Inga, age 14, and one boy, age 12, named Jacob. Their house was just on the other side of Burgsvik. It was a large house made of stacked layers of limestone and had a high-pitched thatched covered roof with a large loft. Ansgar made Catla a beautiful fireplace with a chimney like he had seen in Constantinople. Pine and birch trees surrounded the house. There were warm, freshwater pools formed in the limestone beds near the beach, so it was a chance to bathe and enjoy the sunshine, but also it was a chance to have a festival.

As they disembarked, Estrid and Ingegerd were given beautiful Gotland orchids by Catla and her girls. Estrid and Ingegerd loved them and felt very welcomed. The orchids were from a marsh nearby. Ingegerd could hardly wait to show her new jewelry to Catla. Catla was very impressed. Ulvhild and Inga were in awe of the older Ingegerd. She had beautiful clothes, expensive jewelry, and wore eyeshadow. They showed



*Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev*





**Yaroslav the Wise**

her their pet *igelkott* (hedgehog). Ingegerd asked, “*Vad är hans namn?*” “*Hans namn är Blyg* [His name is Shy],” *sa Ulvhild*. Olof and Ansgar talked about how the silver mines at Baghdad were depleting. Olof asked Ansgar what he thought about the idea of establishing a mint in Sigtuna. Ansgar thought it was a promising idea.

The first night they had roasted lamb, carrots, and onions with lots of fresh spring vegetables. The second night they had fresh-baked cod and flounder, partridges roasted on a stick, and boiled potatoes with dill. Olof surprised everyone and served some wine he acquired from the Rhineland. They sang songs and talked about Ingegerd’s upcoming wedding. Ansgar and Christina gave Olof some high-quality whetstones for his personal use and for trade or gifts in Ladoga or Kiev. They also gave Estrid and Ingegerd hand-carved cooking utensils made of white cedar, popular gifts among the women. It was a festive time. The next morning at daybreak Olof and his family were off.

Their journey took them south of Finland and on to Staraja (old) Ladoga, a route Olof knew well. They were comfortable traversing the relatively calm Baltic. When they arrived at Staraja Ladoga, they found it bustling with shops, warehouses, merchants, smiths, jewelry makers, and boat repairmen. Ingegerd heard many people speaking Norse. Yaroslav was there to meet

them. He rode a beautiful black Arabian stallion. Ingegerd had heard of these horses but had never seen one. She was pleased that Yaroslav was a handsome, fit man with a short, brown beard. At this time, he was 41 years old.

Yaroslav had his army with him, and he left a security detachment to guard Olof’s warships at Staraja Ladoga. His army escorted Olof and the marriage party by local riverboats and guides upriver to Novgorod, then across Lake Ilmen up the Lovat River to the Valdai Hills. With some short portages they finally reached the Dnieper River and Kiev.

As they approached Kiev, Ingegerd was filled with excitement to see her new home. She noticed the large flotilla of merchant ships there being loaded with furs, slaves, wax, and honey. The boats were bound for Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire. Smaller riverboats were headed the other way, toward Staraja Ladoga where their cargos of jewelry, silk, iron tools, and livestock would be transferred again to larger boats headed to Paviken on Gotland.

Kiev was prosperous, new, and its population was growing. Already it exceeded a thousand people. Ingegerd and Yaroslav were

married in Kiev, and they had a huge wedding feast to celebrate. The Vikings from Sigtuna were treated to foods seasoned with Mediterranean spices and herbs they had never tasted before. Ingegerd was happy to be married and to be crowned Grand Princess of Kiev and Novgorod. She decided to change her name to Irene (the Greek word for peace) and later received the name Irina Anna. As a marriage gift, Yaroslav gave her Ladoga and the adjacent lands. She wisely placed her uncle, jarl Ragnvald Ulfsson, to rule in her stead. Her parents were pleased and left to return home in Sigtuna.

When all his children were married, Olof decided to concentrate on other matters. Christianity had come to Sweden, and all the royalty were becoming baptized and aligning themselves with the power of the church. Olof decided to become baptized at Husaby parish church, at a spring there. He established a treasury and had copper coins minted in Sigtuna that bore the Latin inscription *OLUF REX* and



*St. Anna of Novgorod*



Sigtuna written as *SIDEI*, Si[gtuna] Dei, meaning God's Sigtuna. Around 1021-1022, Olof died.

Yaroslav and Ingegerd were a good match and worked as a team. They both were active in supporting the Catholic Church of Rome. They started the construction of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev and then another Saint Sophia Cathedral at Novgorod. Together they had a happy marriage and produced ten children, six sons and four daughters. Yaroslav took care of his sons, giving them jobs as princes or bishops.

Ingegerd must have inherited her mother's and grandmother's desire to be queen, because she managed to have all her daughters marry royalty. Three became queens: Elizabeth (Elisiv) of Kiev, Queen of Norway; Anastasia of Kiev, Queen of Hungary; and Anne of

Kiev, Queen of France. Agatha of Kiev married Prince Edward the Exile.

**I**ngegerd died February 10, 1050. Because of her contributions and work in support of the Catholic Church, she was declared a saint by the name of St. Anna of Novgorod and Kiev. The church cited the following:

✚ St. Anna, Grand Duchess of Novgorod, was the daughter of Swedish King Olof Skötkonung, the All-Christian King, who did much to spread Orthodoxy in Scandinavia, and the pious Queen Estrid.

✚ In Sweden she was known as Princess Ingegard; she married Yaroslav I the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev, who was the founder of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in 1016, taking the name Irene.

✚ She gave shelter to the outcast sons of British King Edmund, Edwin and Edward, as well as to the Norwegian prince Magnus, who later returned to Norway.

✚ She is perhaps best known as the mother of Vsevolod, the father of Vladimir Monomakh and progenitor of the Princes of Moscow.

✚ Her daughters were Anna, Queen of France, Queen Anastasia of Hungary, and Queen Elizabeth (Elisiv) of Norway.

✚ The whole family was profoundly devout and pious.

✚ She reposed in 1050 in the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom (St. Sophia) in Kiev, having been tonsured a monastic with the name of Anna. 🙏



Montebello Music Club holiday sing-along

Photo by Dian McDonald



final glance



*Photo by Linda Brownlee*