



Ancient Order of Hibernians

JOHN CARDINAL D'ALTON DIVISION 3

December 2022

Brother Hibernians _____



The gratitude issue

As we are on the cusp of Christmas and the end of 2022, we should be so thankful for what we've had this year. I look forward to seeing you at our next division meeting at the Hibernian House **this Friday, December 23rd at 8:00pm**. Aside from discussing the upcoming events of 2023, we'll conduct elections for Division Officers.

Welcome to our six newest members sworn in at the November meeting: Noel Stapleton and John Istorico, both of Pearl River, John Francis of Bardonia, Michael Jensen of New City, Ronald Gerlich of Yonkers and Gary Reilly of Bel Air, MD.

Thank you and congratulations to Larry DeGennaro and chef Bill Boera for the largest Senior Luncheon since the pandemic just before Thanksgiving. Also, thank you to Dennis Madigan and everyone who came out to support our Comedy Night – these social events are getting bigger and better! Thanks, too, to Bill Lee and chef Sean Walsh and the large team that put on the second Pot of Gold party. And the event would not be so successful for the many who supported it by buying tickets.

So many have donated their time. Thank you to the dozen members who gave up a good portion of their Saturday to complete their Major Degree. Thanks to all those who, last Saturday, either were part of the huge group who showed up to lay Christmas Wreaths at St. Anthony's Cemetery or who went to the Orangetown Soccer fields to make the biggest and best yet 'reverse parade' for Christmas for our special needs community.

Good & Welfare –Even in loss, we remember how we were blessed with those we lost. Please say a prayer for our brothers, Jack Cunningham, John (Doc) Jones and Ciaran Green, as well as Eddie O'Dea's mother, Beatrice O'Dea and Tom Slattery's mother-in-law, Mary Culleton – may they rest in peace. Also, please keep John Crilley in your prayers who is spending some time in the hospital in the week leading up to Christmas. Also, continue to pray for those suffering in the Ukraine as well as our law enforcement professionals, healthcare workers and members of the armed services, especially those who can't be home this Christmas.

As always, we pray that you and your family are healthy and safe.

Yours in Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity,

Chuck Parnow

Upcoming Events



Let's turn out and make these some great PR AOH events:

Traditional "Wren Night" – Monday, December 26th, 6:00-9:00 at the Hibernian House – Our Wren Night celebration is once again on this year. The day after Christmas, St. Stephen's Day in Ireland, we will be getting together for some traditional Irish song, music, dance, and storytelling. The day after Christmas, put the hecticness of the season behind you and come out for some great craic! Look for the fliers at the pub soon. See the flier at the link:

<https://praoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/D12E2B68-FB7F-4DE5-A0DC-554DFCDA0B3D.jpeg>

Division 3 Ski Trip – The AOH Division 3 Ski Trip is currently being planned and we need to know how many skiers we've got! Right now, we're on a waiting list for February 11th, and we're going ahead with our planning assuming we get bumped up. The all-day event is scheduled for Saturday, February 11th. The trip includes a bus trip to/from, lift tickets, refreshments on the bus and much more. Look for the sign-up board at the pub or shoot us an email at praoh3@gmail.com!

Senior Luncheon



As noted in the opening letter – what a turnout! We had a packed room of senior attendees, many talented musicians and dancers, many young volunteers, as well as many of our own brothers who stepped up. Thanks to all, and to Larry DeGennaro for all his leadership.



Veteran's Corner



Congratulations to John Draper, and the many other Division members who helped coordinate and work on the "Wreaths Across America" effort – from fund raising to the final placement of wreaths just before Christmas at St. Anthony's. John Edwards and Don McKallen were on point for much of the coordination, and Chris Power helped with planning and coordinating volunteer students from Albertus Magnus. You should have seen the "army" of volunteers who showed up from our Division, American Legion post 329, Pearl River Elks and the Knights of Columbus. Well done, all!

Special Needs Parade



What happens when you combine a blue-sky sunny winter day, over three dozen Christmas lawn decorations, various live cartoon characters, music, Santa, good cheer (and a fire truck!)? Our best Special Needs Christmas parade yet. Thanks to all who came out and supported the event, as well as those who attended.



Hibernian House



In the last month, we had a number of great events upstairs in the Hall. We had a great night for Comedy Night on December 2nd. The following weekend we had a great day of football, highlighted by the annual Army/Navy game. Times are good downstairs, too – if you haven't been by you have to see the Christmas decorations. And don't forget, there's still time to drop by and leave a contribution for our Christmas Family Fund!

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Yes, Virginia (O'Hanlon), There is a Santa Claus



In a troubled world, thank God for the gift of hope called Christmas. For all of us, it is a time where we can take an opportunity to at least momentarily free ourselves of the chains of what seems the depressing realities of the world and once again engage in the saintly innocence of children where our eyes are opened to the magic of the universe and the potential of the human spirit. Perhaps the greatest testament to that faith was prompted by the innocent question of an eight-year-old Irish American Virginia O'Hanlon.

Virginia O'Hanlon was born on Manhattan's Upper West Side in 1889. Her Grandfather had been a founding member of the 63rd Volunteer Regiment of Meagher's Irish Brigade and his bravery had been mentioned in dispatches. Her father, Dr. Phillip O'Hanlon, was a New York City Coroner and had been credited though his forensic work of providing the critical evidence that led to the identification and conviction in a prominent murder case. An intelligent and inquisitive child, Virginia later recalled that whenever there was a question of fact in the family, her father would always turn to the NY Sun Newspaper as the final arbiter; saying "If you see it in The Sun, it's so."

At the age of 8, young Virginia was teased by some bullies about her belief in Santa Claus, causing her to question Santa's existence. Following her father's guidance, she put her question in the form of a letter to the NY Sun.

Dear Editor— I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in The Sun, it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus? – Virginia O'Hanlon

The letter and response by the editor Francis P. Church have become an icon of journalism and a classic affirmation of the Christmas spirit.

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Virginia's story does not end there. Virginia O'Hanlon received a Bachelor of Arts from Hunter College in 1910, a Master's degree in education from Columbia University in 1912, and a doctorate from Fordham University in 1935; considerable achievements at any time, but particularly impressive during an age when higher education was not as accessible for women. She became the principal in a New York City public school serving children with special needs where she served until her retirement in 1959 as a respected and beloved educator. In interviews she would always credit her remarkable life of service to others as aspiring to live up to the ideals of Santa Claus expressed in Francis P. Church's response to her letter when she was 8 years old.

The story of "Yes, Virginia there is a Santa Claus" and Virginia O'Hanlon is a challenge to us all. Let us not in this cynical and sanctimonious age deprive our children of the magic of Christmas and the lesson of Santa Claus, a man who gives of his gifts and talents without asking anything in return, for a sterile, bland politically correct "Happy Holidays" that stands for nothing, affirms nothing, and does not challenge us to aspire to be more than we are. Anyone who does not believe in Santa has but to come to Hibernian House and see the money magically appear without explanation nor credit in the "Family in Need Jar", or toys for needy children show up in the "Toys for Tot" box or the elves who work the Senior Citizen Luncheon and the Special Needs Christmas party.

Nollaig Shona Dhuit!

Neil F. Cosgrove, Historian