

## A new family tradition at Bolton area Monastery

By Lorne Derragh

Is there such thing as a new tradition?

Traditions have their start somewhere. Did you know that for 11 years, the Sisters of Saint Kosmas Aitolos Greek Orthodox Monastery near Bolton have been inviting the community to their store, The Sisters Touch of Christmas? A perfect seasonal family outing to a magical store snuggled in Bolton's rolling hills!

An enchanting gateway and manicured driveway leads to a quaint building, the first on the left.

The doors open to a storybook shop of old-world charm with stunning displays of floor to ceiling shelves, dazzlingly filled with one-of-a-kind handcrafted gifts and displays; a feast for the eyes. A first glance tells you that you'll never see an exclusive shop like this in any mall and you notice that this is not your typical Christmas bazaar.

Once inside, volunteer associates of the nuns welcome you and introduce you to Mr. Frosty. If moms, dads, grammas and grandpas can hold back their anticipation of what's to come, everyone may wish to take a selfie with the jolly four foot high snowman.

Then scented candles, joyful music and the thought of yummy treats beckon you onward.

The first of three rooms contains sparkling, singular blown glass tree ornaments painstakingly hand-painted by the sisters themselves. Upon purchase, some ornaments may be personalized for you by the sisters at no additional charge. There are dozens of themed ornaments representing the interests of every family member.

The sisters are well known for their baked items, fruit cakes and gingerbread. The next room has a kitchen attached where they make chocolates and traditional Greek baklava. After sampling some treats you may wish to pick up one of their traditional holiday recipe books, if you have the time and the inclination to try your hand. But what could be easier than picking out your favourite treats, already wonderfully wrapped in eye catching packaging. Dads may wish try out their seasoned oils made with 100 per cent olive oil while moms check out the beeswax creams, lip balm and soaps made by the sisters themselves. Then the moms can get the dads to meet up with them again at the jewelry section for some helpful suggestions.

Room number three brings us to the children's section; Christmas crafts, Advent calendars, nutcrackers and Santas, all to bring visions of sugar plums to dance in their heads. Unique stocking stuffers abound. The other half of the room is brimming with ideas for accentuating your home's Christmas décor. You'll want to come soon to look over their linens, runners, colourful tablecloths, elegant centrepieces and candles. You'll find angel themes and beautiful nativity scenes with artistically designed mangers and quality European imported figurines.

All these reasonably priced gifts are presented to reflect the true meaning of Christmas. The monies raised by the Sisters in their Christmas store help them in their initiatives to help others throughout the year. On the wall behind the register are plaques they have received from some of the many various service organizations they have supported.

When you make a purchase you will receive a ballot for a free weekly draw. While you fill it out, the kids can write and post a letter to Santa in the mailbox next to Mr. Frosty.

For timeless Christmas keepsakes, unique children's gifts, the very finest holiday items, tastiest recipes and a unique magical experience the Sisters invite you, your family and friends to start a new tradition. Stop by their shop where you are sure to find the perfect yuletide gift.

The store is easy to find. The monastery is at 14155 Caledon King Townline South Bolton.