

# Ithaca Chatter

Publication of the Cornell Campus Club ESL Classes

Volume 12, Issue 1, Fall, 2011

**Happy Birthday, Ithaca Chatter!** *The first issue was published in the Fall of 2001. Since that time many students have treated us to their ideas and adventures.*

**Table of contents:** *Volunteering: a Job with many pros(p1-3)-Christmas in Austria(p1&7-8)- Not wishing for the moon-Improve your English. Join a Book Club(p3)- ICHIGO ICHIE: A Once-in-a-Lifetime Experience(p4)- A Trip to Tongli Water Town(p5-6)- Vacations: Learning, relaxing or relationship-enhancing?(p6-7)-Diamonte Poems (p8).*

---

## ***Volunteering: A job with many pros*** ***Andrea Acevedo, Colombia***



An ESL classmate, Agustina, from Chile says:  
"I never thought of being a volunteer before I left my home country Chile. Now that I am here in Ithaca accompanying my significant other while he studies at Cornell, in my first days I felt the necessity of getting a life of my own here. That's why I thought about volunteering, and I researched quite a lot before finding an option that suited my interests. That's how I ended up as a volunteer in the Plantations, where I go once a week to help in the Greenhouse. This experience has been really therapeutic to me because apart from feeling helpful with the work I do, it's really rewarding the fact of learning about plants and how to grow them, also to see how you can preserve their lives, feeling your help is useful and significant to a concrete and real purpose; preserving the vegetable kingdom at Cornell."

**This story continues on p. 2&3**

## ***Christmas in Austria*** ***Silvia Haslhofer-Jungwirth, Austria***

This February my family and I moved from Vienna to Ithaca. We're staying here for two years because of my husband's position as a post-doc at Cornell University. Although Ithaca is a very liveable place, we miss our family and friends. That's why we are going to visit them around Christmas time for three weeks. Next year, we're planning to stay in the US to get to know how different Christmas is celebrated compared to Austria.

While I'm writing this article some people in Austria are attending one of the many Christmas markets in the bigger cities or villages. (see photo below) The opening of the Christmas markets happens to be earlier every year. Twenty years ago they opened at the end of November or beginning of December. Nowadays they open by mid-November. The end of the Christmas market season is the afternoon of the 24th of December.



**Christkindlmarkt on Vienna's Rathausplatz**

**This story continues on p. 7&8**

## Volunteering continued

Many experiences change life; one of them is being a volunteer. Maybe it won't change your life, but for sure it will change whoever receives your help.

Personally, I have been a volunteer in different projects during my life. The most important for me was one where I participated during my college in my home city. In Colombia as well as many other countries in

Latin America there is a foundation called "One roof for my country." The most important project is go to poor neighborhoods and build houses for people who used to live in houses they had built themselves with weak materials. The foundation builds houses that are classified as "emergency" house; therefore, they just have two rooms and are made with big panels of wood. The only condition to the families is that they have to own the land to build the house on it. Since there were too many families asking for help before the construction, it was necessary to research the area and find the most needy families. In this foundation I helped with the construction of five houses and going to interview possible families to get the house.

Because the volunteers in this foundation are college guys, the construction used to be on vacation. So it took at least one week. Typically each group built two houses. Each group is around seven people and there are almost twenty groups. I'm going to try to describe how each house was built.

When the construction started, the volunteers met the family who was going to benefit. The first thing to do after that was flattening the field and digging big holes(seven) to put beams inside them. I remember one time that it was very cold and very early in the morning, the temperature was around 5 C, and the earth was very hard but every time that I dug a small quantity of earth I could see the expression on the family's faces that in less than three days they will have a home. After, over the beams I nailed part of the floor that was two very heavy panels of wood. The first day of work finished here because it was very late; and even though I felt very excited to finish the house. I had to stop to rest; besides, in these neighborhoods there weren't lights. The next day I helped with the walls that were heavy panels of wood, so while someone else nailed, I held the wall and if he/she was tired, I nailed and he/she held it. This process took around five hours, so when we finished it was time for lunch. I didn't mention it before but when the volunteers are building the house, the benefiting family cooks lunch. That way at lunch time we can share time with the family

and get to know them better, because I helped five families I can't describe each one; however, I can say something that all the families had in common. They were very, very grateful. Going back to building the house, it was time for the roof. Usually people who are the lightest go up to tie the roof. I was with four boys and two other girls. I was one of the lightest, so I went up to tie the roof. It is difficult to me describe how I did it, but the roof is the most easy part of building the house because it was just putting the roof and tying it to beams inside the house, but also it was the most exciting part because it was the last step to give the family a home. The next day I started another building so each construction is very similar to what I described; however, the family is different; therefore, it is another experience.

However, you could be thinking " Oh, you were a volunteer in your country because you lived in a country where people had that kind of needs." But I want to tell you, well, everywhere there are people with needs, and not just people. You can help animals, or environment projects or whatever do you feel like.

So, if you are interested in helping and have free time, just search for what you can do. Also you have to look what you need to be a volunteer in and what are you interested in. For example, the first time that I came to the United States, I tried to be a volunteer at the local pet shelter but since I didn't have medical insurance, I couldn't help there.

A important reason to be a volunteer here in the United States is that when you are a volunteer, you can share space with native English speakers. So it is a very good way to improve your language skills (specially listening and talking) and to get involved in the United States' culture. For example, where I am volunteering now nobody speaks Spanish and because they know that I am there to help and learn, they teach me in a friendly way. Also, I can practice all that I have learned in my ESL classes (something that doesn't happen if I am at home alone).

Right now, I'm volunteering at Ithaca Health Alliance, where they conduct two major projects: The Ithaca Free Clinic and the Ithaca Health Fund. The Ithaca Free clinic is a free, integrated medical center located in Ithaca, NY, where visitors receive conventional and holistic medical service, completely without charge. The Ithaca Health Fund is a medical assistance program that provides grants for specific categories of health service to community members who meet income eligibility requirements. I am on the community outreach and educational program team, so what I do is helping with projects to make the clinic more recognized and to teach patients about diseases. I

was very interested in being a volunteer in this foundation because I think that they are making a beautiful program serving un- and underinsured people that otherwise cannot go to a doctor, and many diseases can be worse if people wait too long to consult a professional. If you are interested in helping this foundation with being a volunteer or with donations, you can go to the web site [www.ithacahealth.org](http://www.ithacahealth.org) or by phone (607)330-1254 (Donations in any amount are welcome).

To finish I want to give you a quote that I always remind about being a volunteer. "A young girl was walking along a beach upon which thousands of starfish had been washed up during a terrible storm. When she came to each starfish, she would pick it up, and throw it back into the ocean. People watched her with amusement. She had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, "Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can't save all these starfish. You can't begin to make a difference!" The girl seemed crushed, suddenly deflated. But after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean. Then she looked up at the man and replied, "Well, I made a difference to that one!"

The old man looked at the girl inquisitively and thought about what she had done and said. Inspired, he joined the little girl in throwing starfish back into the sea. Soon others joined, and all the starfish were saved. " - adapted from the Star Thrower by Loren C. Eiseley.

If you want to see the houses.  
[http://www.untechoparamipais.org/colombia/sitio/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=9&Itemid=16](http://www.untechoparamipais.org/colombia/sitio/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=9&Itemid=16)

## ***I'm not asking for the moon.***

### ***Advanced Class D3***

I'm not asking for the moon. I just want to:

- enjoy my life wherever I am.
- not gain weight any more.
- see my grandmother.
- enjoy spectacular fall foliage.
- see Obama re-elected.
- become a better wife.
- get well planned for my next vacation.
- play tennis and spend some time with my family on a lovely sunny Sunday.
- live peacefully and happily.

## ***Improve Your English: Join a Book Group*** ***Elisaveta Matovska, Macedonia***

The "book club" is a group of a few people willing to read books, to make new friends, and to improve their English. The members in our book group are former, current, and future Campus Club ESL students.

Our "book club" is active during the school year, and we meet every two weeks to discuss a book. We are a very democratic group of friends, so we choose a book to read by voting. Every member in the group proposes one or two books for the next reading, and we vote. The book proposal with the most votes is the chosen one. Some of the books we have chosen so far include: the Jane Austen collection, *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa-Al-Aswany, *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, *The Catcher in the Rye* by Salinger. Usually we read fiction and the books are 300 pages on average. We split the book in two parts, so we first discuss half of the book, and then the other half and the whole book. In our meetings we talk about the author of the book, the characters, the plot. We also relate topics from the book to traditions specific to each of our cultures. In that way we improve our English but also we learn something new about different cultures and customs. And we have great time together as a book group twice a month, every time for about two hours.

Reading books in English is an interesting way to enrich your vocabulary, to start thinking in English, to make construction of sentences and conversation in English in a more natural way, without thinking of grammatical rules. There are many options for improving your English; reading books on your own or as a member of a group is an excellent choice!

**ESL Spring 2012 Registration,  
Saturday, January 21,  
12 noon to 1 p.m.,  
Hasbrouck Community Center**

**The timetable will be post mid-  
January, 2012:**

**[www.campusclub.cornell.edu/ESL](http://www.campusclub.cornell.edu/ESL)**

## ***ICHIGO ICHIE: A Once-in-a-Lifetime***

### ***Experience***

#### ***Hirano Kazuko, Japan***

We Japanese have the spirit "ICHIGO-ICHIE." It is a Japanese term from Japanese tea ceremony. The direct translation is, "when we are invited to a tea ceremony, we should think it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience." Now I spend my life in Ithaca with this spirit as my favorite motto.

To tell the truth, I lived in Ithaca about 20 years ago. My husband and I stayed at Maplewood Park. At that time, my husband was an L.L.M. student at the Cornell Law School. He was an employee of Subaru, and he was sent here by the company. He wanted to pass the Bar Examination of New York State, because he belonged to the Legal Department and the company expected him to pass the bar examination.

While he studied American laws from early mornings to late nights, to my regret, even though I had a lot of time to learn English, I didn't do so. Because there were many Japanese from Japanese companies at Maplewood Park, I didn't have to speak English.

When some social events were held somewhere, we Japanese went there in Japanese groups. When I wanted to go shopping, I went to malls with my husband every weekend. When I was in trouble with English in an English class, some Japanese who was good at English helped me and she translated what the teacher said into Japanese for me. I always waited for somebody's help. I spent my important life in Ithaca without an effort to speak English.

As my husband passed the examination at the first attempt, we went back to Japan. Of course, I had wonderful memories in Ithaca. How gorgeous the Christmas party was! How interesting the wine-tasting was! But as I hadn't made the effort to speak English, I couldn't get the feeling of any achievement in my life in Ithaca.

After 10 years from our first visit to Ithaca, my husband changed his job and he became a professor at his alma mater university. And this year, he decided to come to his American alma mater, Cornell University as the place to carry out his research during his sabbatical.

As we decided to come to Ithaca again, I thought that I had to deepen my knowledge about Japanese culture. Especially, Japanese tea ceremony is one of the most famous, unique cultures in Japan, but at that time, I

couldn't explain the history, how to drink, and the spirit of it exactly. I was ashamed of my ignorance. From last year, I began learning it. The master of Japanese tea ceremony said, "This tea is made for only you only today. I can't prepare the self-same tea tomorrow. Every day is a different day. Every experience in every day is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We call the spirit "ICHIGO ICHIE." Don't waste your time." I came to recognize the meaning of the spirit of "ICHIGO ICHIE."

What a wasteful life I had spent in Ithaca! From that time, I began studying English by myself in Japan but I had no chance to speak it. So I came to Ithaca with my poor English.

One day, I had a small happening in Ithaca. When I wore a Japanese kimono here one month ago, an American asked to me without malice, "Are you a geisha-girl?" He continued, "If I misunderstand Japanese culture, so sorry. But I don't know it truly!" If I were a good English speaker, I could explain Japanese culture to him correctly. It was a real disappointment that I couldn't tell him what I thought.

So, I put myself into the situation where I must speak English. It is very hard for me but I practice speaking English every day. On October 26, my husband had a special lecture at the Cornell Law School. I was very proud of him when he lectured Japanese Law and answered some questions from law school students in English perfectly., I envied him very much.

On the same evening, we were invited to a thank you party for my husband. It was held at a nice American restaurant, The Heights Cafe. I was tense at the party. The lady who kindly held the party is a beautiful, trilingual professor of law and anthropology. One gentleman of the invitees is my husband's adviser at the Cornell Law School. He is one of the most authoritative law professors. Other invitees are various splendid professionals. They are very smart! While they spoke about many topics in English, I had to listen very carefully to what they said and I had to speak in English as much as possible. And I had to order from the menu without my husband's help, because he sat far away from me. To my delight, the cuisine that I ordered was served perfectly as I had imagined! I could understand a little bit their difficult conversations. I was very glad about my progress of English. These experiences have encouraged me.

There are a lot of opportunities that improve my English every day. The spirit to take these opportunities is "ICHIGO-ICHIE."

## ***A Trip to Tongli Water Town***

### ***Heli Chen, China***

One of the most unforgettable trips in my memory is the trip to Tongli--an old but well preserved water town with a history of more than 1,000 years in Eastern China. Located on the eastern shore of Taihu Lake, just 18 kilometers from Suzhou City, Tongli town is 63 square kilometers in area and has a population of over 33 thousand, with its nickname, "The Little Venice of the Orient". After working in Shanghai for nearly one year, I planned to spend the Chinese Labor Day holiday in 2010 with two friends—Shirley and Hai. We purchased the tickets for Tongli online and booked a Youth Hotel inside the water town in advance.

We started our journey at 3 p.m. in order to avoid the crowds, took high speed train from Shanghai and then transferred to the local bus in Suzhou. Around 5 p.m., we arrived at Tongli and felt so excited. After entering the town, we rushed to our hotel and checked in. From the map of Tongli, we can see that the surface of the town is in the shape of a rough circle, surrounded by the inner, middle and outer rivers. It is divided into 7 pieces of land with different sizes, with the water area occupying one-fifth of the total town area. In the town streets two rivers run parallel to each other. Before we leaving for Tongli, some friends suggested to us to have the night scene of Tongli, so we waited in the room till it got dark and nights there were all on, then we left hotel and walked along the town street.

Wooden tour boats eased down the waterways slowly and glided past residences, stores, gardens and restaurants. The refreshing breeze blew gently with comfortable humidity while we enjoyed the beautiful night scene. The town looked bustling with noise and excitement because there were many tourists like us. After a one-hour walk in the town, we were a little hungry and found a restaurant named "Lee's home-made dish" near the river. From the waiter's recommendation, we ordered Tongli's specialties: Shelled Freshwater Shrimp in Cakes; Three-Slice Spring Rolls; Braised, Minced Eel; and the classical dish made of a combination of whitefish, mandarin fish and turtle. We enjoyed these delicious dishes while talking happily.

We got up early next day due to our full travel schedule. Walking out the hotel, I had the opportunity to observe the Residential House along the riverside. Most residences there were built in the Ming (AD 1368 – 1644) and Qing (AD 1644 – 1911) Dynasties and decorated with flying eaves, carved windows, porcelain furniture, figured clay

bricks, dapper gardens and small stairs leading down to the water.

To many Chinese, Tongli is well known as "The Town of One Garden, Two Mansions, and Three Bridges." One Garden refers to Tuisi Garden, built in late 1880s. The garden is divided into two parts. The residential area to the west consists of an outer house and inner house including a sedan hall, a tea hall, a main reception hall and two buildings forming the actual dwelling. The garden in the east has ponds, marble boats, halls, rockeries and bridges. Together with flourishing trees and colorful flowers the garden greets visitors with its beauty and charm whatever the season. Two Mansions stand for The Jiayin and Chongben Mansions, facing each other across a stream, both date from the early 20th century following Ming Dynasty design styles.

The best way to see Tongli is by canal, of course. After a long walk in the town of its primary garden and mansions, we rent a small wooden tour boat and sat to feel the real travel on water. It confirmed the town's nickname-- The Little Venice of the Orient. Another famous attraction in Tongli is its bridge-system. There are 49 stone bridges and each of them has a name. The most notable three bridges are Taiping (means "Peace") Bridge, Jili (means "Luck") Bridge and Changqing (means "Lasting") Bridge.

It was 4 p.m. when we finished our trip in Tongli. After a short rest, we took the long-distance bus back home. Though we were quite tired when reaching home, we were so glad that we had taken the two-day trip to Tongli to witness its profound cultural background and achievement and to explore its special attractions and charms. [Note: The history background and detailed data of Tongli are referred from Internet.]

## ***Vacations: Learning, relaxing or relationship-enhancing?***

### ***Huanjue Fu, China***

Everyone looks forward to a vacation, especially after working hard for several months. We know the length of a typical vacation spans from several days to two weeks when we can temporarily get away from our work to relax our bodies and minds. However, if we don't know where we want to go or don't make a good plan of the vacation, our vacation may just become a terrible experience. So it is very important for us to know which type of vacation we want to have. Based on purposes, vacations can be divided into three broad types: learning, relaxing and relationship-enhancing.

If someone wants to understand the history and culture of other areas better or experience a different life, the learning and experiencing type vacation is the right choice. Usually this person has never been to the vacation destination before and has yearned for the destination for a long time. For example, one might want to visit Rome, which is the capital of Italy and also is the center of politics, the economy and culture of Italy. There are a lot of famous and imposing buildings such as the Pantheon, Colosseum and Arch of Constantine which have a long and glorious history. By visiting them, he can feel the greatness of the Rome Empire and understand the rise and fall of the Empire better. If someone wants to know the religion of Rome, he can visit St. Peter's Square which has not only a historical sense of magnificence but also a strong atmosphere of religion. Besides, a vacationer might travel to Europe to understand the Renaissance, a cultural movement happened from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He can understand the ideas of famous persons through appreciating Leonardo De Vinci's drawings, Michelangelo's sculptures and Shakespeare's dramas. He also can understand the impact of the Renaissance on the whole Europe. Last, if he hopes to experience a new life, he can spend one or two weeks in an Indian village to learn their culture, customs and language. As mentioned in the article "Types of Vacations", "More often than not, a vacation where you get to learn and experience different things can give you a new perspective in life." (Lawson, par. 2). A vacationer can enhance his knowledge of history and understand the different cultures and etiquettes of the different countries through this type of vacation.

When a person gets tired or exhausted after a period of hard working, he should consider the relaxing type vacation. It is purely for relaxing our bodies and minds, but not for learning. That is, when someone chooses this type of vacation, he seeks fun, entertainment and leisure usually in a peaceful environment, in contrast to the famous and historical sites for the learning vacation. "For the busy professional and business person, this is the perfect vacation." (Lawson, par. 3). If someone wants to get away from the noise and crowd of a big city, he can find a quiet place such as a small town by a lake or mountain to get closer to nature and breathe the fresh air. He can go boating or fishing in the lake, ride a bicycle in a country road or just lay down in a lounge to enjoy the sunshine. Such leisure activities would allow anyone quickly to recover himself from the tiredness and nervousness caused by a busy work schedule. For some women, it is the best choice to go to the shopping malls of some small cities to do shopping in order to release their stress. In addition, if someone only has a few days' vacation, he can always find a beautiful resort nearby to play golf or go to a spa to fully relax himself. We can

adjust our mood and mind to reach a good condition by this type of vacation, and then we will have the full energy to get ready for the next challenge in our lives.

Finally, the last type of vacation is for enhancing a person's relationships with his families or friends. In some sense, life is pretty short and family and friendship are the most precious property we have. Usually when life gets busy with endless work and study, a person has limited time to communicate with his parents, his children or his friends. In this case, it is the best chance for him to spend time with his families and friends during a vacation. The main difference between this type of vacation and the first two categories is that the vacationer is not going to learn the history or culture, nor to relax himself, but to get together with his families or good friends to share his life stories, successes or even frustrations. Thus, the destinations don't have to be famous or special, but they should be meaningful. For example, one can go to visit his parents or friends during the Thanksgivings time to show how important they are in his life. He can just stay at their homes and go around the neighborhoods. He will greatly enhance his relationships with his parents or friends by doing simple things such as cooking, watching TV and singing together. To quote Nancy Parode, "Whether you travel to their home or meet them for a special, multigenerational adventure, you'll make memories that will last a lifetime." (par. 6). Another good example is to make romantic vacation plans with a person's loved ones such as going to Hawaii for a honeymoon or to celebrate an anniversary of a wedding. Furthermore, someone can organize a whole family vacation with both his parents and children to some fun destinations such as the Disney World. This type of vacation not only strengthens the family bonds or friendship but also creates a happy memory with each other.

After we know these three major types of vacations, we can choose any one of them when our next vacation comes. We can broaden our horizon on history and culture by choosing the learning type vacation, relax our bodies and minds fully through the relaxing type vacation, or enjoy the pleasure and happiness with our family or friends via the relationship-enhancing type vacation. So think about your purpose, plan your destination and just enjoy your vacation!

### Works Cited

- Lawson, Pamela. "Types of Vacations." *ezinearticles.com*. EzineArticles.com. 30 Jan. 2010. Web. 03 Oct. 2011.
- Parode, Nancy. "Reasons to Travel: Choose Your Ideal Trip." *seniortravel.about.com*. About.com. 2011. Web. 10 Oct. 2011.

## **Christmas in Austria continued** ***Silvia Haslhofer-Jungwirth, Austria***

While I'm writing this article some people in Austria are attending one of the many Christmas markets in the bigger cities or villages. The opening of the Christmas markets happens to be earlier every year. Twenty years ago they opened at the end of November or beginning of December. Nowadays they open by mid-November. The end of the Christmas market season is the afternoon of the 24th of December.

At the Christmas market, which is called "Christkindlmarkt" in German, you can buy Christmas decorations or handicrafts such as hand-made jewelry or porcelain as a Christmas gift or just for yourself. Apart from that, there are also lots of booths where you can buy candies, Christmas cookies, snacks and some hot punch, especially the "Gluehwein".

If you want to meet with friends in this very special season, you will meet at a "Christkindlmarkt" in the evening, because it's such a lovely place with all the lights and decorations, the delicious aroma of gingerbread mixed with the aroma of hot punch and the laughter of the people having fun. Some years ago, when I wasn't a mother yet, I was at a Christmas market every third day on average! Around ten years ago good friends of mine started a special Christmas market event in Vienna. Every 7th of Dec. we organize a Christmas market walk. We start in the early evening at one Christmas market and walk from one to another having stops for half an hour at each. In total we visit four Christmas markets and stay longer at the last one. It's really nice getting some exercise and enjoying the beautiful markets and its products. The very first times there were only eight people. In the last years the number of participants has increased to more than thirty people.

The reason why we always do that on this date - no matter how bad the weather conditions are - is that the next day is a national holiday. It's the Catholic Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Because most Austrians are Catholic, we have many national holidays with Catholic origin. On Sundays and national holidays all shops besides a few exceptions must stay closed. But since a few years on the 8th of Dec. shops are allowed to open. I don't like to go shopping on that day because there are too many people having some kind of shopping fever.

Two days before, on the 6th of Dec., is Saint Nicholas Day. Though it's not a national holiday, it's a special day in particular for children. Saint Nicholas, who looks

similar to Santa Claus, visits them in the evening and brings gifts like chocolate, oranges and peanuts, but only if they behaved well during the year. Otherwise the companion of Saint Nicholas called "Krampus", frightens them a little bit.

Two days before Saint Nicholas-Day, on the 4th of Dec. is the name day of Saint Barbara. It's an old custom to cut some branches of a fruit-bearing tree, e.g. cherry, apple or pear tree, and water it. Until the 24th of Dec. they will bloom and bring some light to dark winter days. Folk belief says the bloom brings luck for the next year.

On the 1st of Dec. - the beginning of the Advent, which is the time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas - almost every child gets an Advent calendar, which is filled with chocolate or nice pictures for every day until the 24th of December.

In Advent it is also very common to have an Advent wreath with four candles. Every Sunday before Christmas, you light one more candle while sitting together with your family and praying or only talking, singing or reading stories together.

Though Christmas Eve on the 24th of Dec. isn't a national holiday, in Austria it is the most important day during Christmas time. Either the evening before or on Christmas Eve, you decorate your Christmas tree and then hide it until the evening comes, especially if you have children.

For the Catholics the 24th of Dec. is a fast day until dawn. In the evening as a Catholic you should pray together with your family while all four candles on the Advent wreath are lighted. You also go to important rooms of your home to pray there and bless the room with incense and holy water. Afterwards, one family member tolls a small bell, which is the sign that the Christ Child has finished his job of bringing the gifts and the Christmas tree. Then it's time for the eagerly awaited distribution of Christmas gifts right in front of the lighted Christmas tree and the Christmas crèche that shows the nativity scene of Christ Child in the way it's told in the bible. If you haven't had dinner before you have it now. Typically you have ham, fish, duck or goose with many side dishes for that special dinner. Afterwards you drink coffee or tea and taste the Christmas cookies that were baked during the Advent but were not supposed to be eaten before that day.

Afterwards, if you're not too tired, as a Catholic, you will go to the church, where a very festive mass will be celebrated. The time of the beginning varies between 10 pm and 12 pm. In my home village the Christmas mass

begins at 10 pm, but you have to be there early, if you want a seat. Afterwards, the church is always crowded then. I like the Christmas mass at my home village very much because you hardly see any church attendee that is not in a good mood after the beautiful ceremony in which a chorus sings and which ends with everyone singing the grandiose song “Silent Night”.

The 25th and 26th of Dec. (Christmas Day and the Saint Stephens Day) are national holidays in Austria, too. On

Christmas Eve, which isn't a national holiday but a shorter workday for most of the people, you celebrate Christmas

with your nuclear family. On the two days afterwards you celebrate with your extended families.

Regrettably Christmas tends to lose its original idea of being a feast of love. It's becoming more and more commercial and many people only appreciate receiving valuable presents. Nevertheless, I like Christmas a lot because it's such a big family festivity with all the colorful Christmas decoration that brings color and light into the dark winter days. And to be honest: who doesn't like getting some gifts or seeing the pleased faces of beloved people opening a gift.

## ***Diamonte Poem Exercise, Class D4***

*Line 1 – Noun 1*

*Line 2 – 2 adjectives describing noun 1*

*Line 3 – 3 participles – “ing” action words*

*Line 4 – 4 nouns – this time FIRST TWO relate to noun 1,*

*SECOND TWO introduce noun 2*

*Line 5 = 3 participles describing noun 2*

*Line 6 2 adjectives describing noun 2*

*Line 7 – noun 2*

Winter  
Long, cold  
Freezing, depressing, shoveling  
Ice, snow, sun, rain  
Shining, swimming, mowing  
Short, hot  
Summer

Kitten  
Tiny, fluffy  
Mewing, playing, purring  
Baby, sweetie, hunter, watcher  
Sleeping, chasing, stretching  
Independent, mysterious  
Cat

Time  
Precious, endless  
Flying, changing, disappearing  
Money, thief, journey, gift  
Climbing, learning, racing  
Wonderful, meaningful  
Life

Death  
Tearful, gravity  
Burying, mourning, despairing  
Cemetery, wreath, freedom, future  
Enjoying, hoping, expecting  
Happy, healthy  
Life

Sun  
Huge, bright  
Shining, warming, burning  
Day, light, darkness, night  
Blinking, shimmering, dancing  
Tiny, distant  
Stars