

Twelve Days of Christmas



Jan 2013

What's Inside...

Feature Article:
The Twelve Days of Christmas p2

Seasonal Notes:
Twelve Ways to Celebrate p5

SmartLoving:
Twelve Ways to Say 'I Love You' p10

Christmas is a season not a day. Here are some ideas to make the Christmas spirit last...

Jan 2013



This Month...

- Tu 1 Mary, Mother of God
- We 2 Sts Basil & Gregory Nanzianzen
- Th 3 Holy Name of Jesus
- Fr 4 St Elizabeth Ann Seton
- Sa 5 St John Neumann
- Su 6 **The Epiphany**
- Su 13 **Baptism of the Lord**
- Th 17 St Anthony of Egypt
- Su 20 **Ord Time 2
It's a Wedding**
- Su 27 **Ord Time 3
Many Parts,
One Body**



Beginning on Christmas day and ending on the Feast of the Epiphany (6th January) **Christmastide** is an ancient tradition, marking celebrations for twelve days. In the Middle Ages, it was a time of continuous feasting and revelry. It has been immortalised forever in Shakespeare's romantic comedy *Twelfth Night*, Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* and the traditional Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

Due to the rise of secular traditions and the commercialisation of Christmas, this season has largely been forgotten as more and more emphasis is given to pre-Christmas shopping and post-Christmas sales. CathFamily is proud to join the movement to reclaim Christmas as a truly Christ-centered festival.

On the First Day of Christmas...

You may have heard or read about the Christian symbolism of the popular carol *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. The story goes that the 16th Century carol was actually an encoded catechesis on the Christian faith recited during the persecutions and religious turmoil in Tudor England.

As clever and plausible as it sounds, this interpretation is not historically accurate, but is a modern re-reading of the symbolism of the various gifts. The primary evidence of the time indicates that *The Twelve Days of Christmas* was a catchy ditty describing the various feasting and merry-making that was part of Christmastide.

But... the myth does make for a great story, and in the face of the rampant commercialisation of Christmas, the reinterpretation of the carol is part of a broader attempt by Christians to reclaim the true meaning of Christmas.



Sacred Numbers...

The Judeo-Christian tradition understands numbers to have a rich and symbolic meaning. The myth of *The Twelve Days of Christmas* draws on this tradition and is a clever way of engaging children in understanding the teachings of the Church.



A patridge in a pear tree...

The crucified Christ.



Two turtle doves...

Jesus' human and divine nature.



Three french hens...

The Trinity, one God in three persons.



Four calling birds...

The four gospels.



Five golden rings...

The Torah or the wounds of Christ.



Six geese a-laying...

The six days of creation.



Seven swans a-swimming...

The gifts of the Holy Spirit.



Eight maids a-milking...

The Beatitudes and the resurrection.



Nine ladies dancing...

The nine Choirs of Angels.



Ten lord a-leaping...

The 10 Commandments.



Eleven pipers piping...

The 11 faithful disciples.



Twelve drummers drumming...

The 12 beliefs in the Apostle's creed.

Twelve Ways to Celebrate...

To Start: Tue Dec 25 | Christmas Day

Have a birthday cake for the birthday boy! This is a great way to consolidate Christmas as the celebration of the **birthday** of Christ.

1. Wed Dec 26 | St Stephen

As a deacon in the early Church, **St Stephen** was stoned to death. **Have a stone skipping competition or collect some stones and decorate them with 'Stephen' or a crown (the meaning of his name).**

2. Thu Dec 27 | St John the Apostle

As the 'beloved disciple' and author of the fourth Gospel, John's writings express his intimacy and affection for Christ. **Tell someone you love them today.**



**Giorgio Varsari,
The Martyrdom of
St Stephen**



3. Fri Dec 28 | Holy Innocents

A day to remember the innocent victims of Herod. **Pray today for all children, preborn and born, who have lost their lives.**

4. Sat Dec 29 | St Thomas Becket

As the Archbishop of Canterbury, **Thomas** called the King of England to account and was martyred 1170. **Invite one of your non-catholic friends to Mass and a meal.**

5. Sun Dec 30 | Holy Family

A day to honour family. **Get a family photo taken today, or call a family relative that you have not seen for a while.**

6. Mon Dec 31 | Pope Sylvester I

As the Pope during the reign of Roman Emperor Constantine, **Sylvester** is often depicted slaying a dragon. **Play a dragon game or watch a dragon movie together.**

7. Tue Jan 1 | Mary, Mother of God

As the new year starts, make your resolution something that will build your family life. **Commit to a weekly family night or keep Sunday for worship and family time.**

8. Wed Jan 2 | Sts Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen

As founders of the monastic movement in the Eastern church, Basil and Gregory modelled simplicity of living. **Do that clean up you have been meaning to do. Pass on your unwanted clothes to charity. Throw out the rubbish that clutters your life.**

9. Thu Jan 3 | Holy Name of Jesus

In Jewish tradition, babies are given a name and the boys are circumcised on the eighth day after birth. **Today, wear the name of Jesus proudly: write it in chalk on the sidewalk, tattoo with pens his name on your arm, make flags or streamers with the name of 'Jesus', paint a t-shirt.**





St Elizabeth's
Home before her
conversion, New
York City.

10. Fri Jan 4 | St Elizabeth Ann Seton

As a young widow and mother, **Elizabeth** converted to the Catholic faith and started a school to educate her own children as well as the poor of Baltimore. **Do something educational with the family today – visit a museum, watch a documentary, get a book from the library.**

11. Sat Jan 5 | St John Neumann

While serving as the Archbishop of Philadelphia, **John** established an extensive Catholic school system, was an advocate for peace and was able to hear confessions in six languages. **Learn to say "The Peace of Christ be with you" in another language today (try Google translator).**

12.Sun Jan 6 | Epiphany

Marking the visit by the Magi (three learned men from the East), epiphany means “appearance, manifestation”.

Make a gift to God today:

- **Gold – something from your material wealth.**
- **Frankincense – a talent or special gift that you could use for God’s glory.**
- **Myrrh – a gift of time to give in service to another.**



Finish how you started!

A traditional European festive food for the Epiphany is a **King Cake**. There are dozens of variations, but essential to all of them is the little figurine of the baby Jesus baked inside. The person who bites into the figurine is crowned King for the day. Check out **Catholic Cuisine** recipes.

Twelve Ways to Say 'I Love you'

Francine & Byron Pirola

In the spirit of the Christmastide, here are twelve ways to communicate your devotion to your honey.

1. Use a dry erase marker to leave a message on your bathroom mirror.
2. Write a love note, roll it up and insert it into a balloon. Decorate the balloon with markers.
3. Using a deck of cards (in order), write a 52 word message, one word to a card. Shuffle before presenting to your honey.
4. Send a photo text message every day for a week with "I appreciate how you..."



5. Write out the words of a love poem on a nice card, spray with your perfume or after shave and post it – old fashioned style!
6. Leave mini notes in surprise places, like the tea pot, a coat pocket, the car dash, a coffee cup.
7. Serenade your beloved with a romantic love song (lip synch if your singing is wobbly).
8. Print a photograph of the two of you, write a love message on it, then cut it up like a jigsaw puzzle and send it to your honey.
9. Set your phone alarm to remind you to say a daily prayer of thanks – then send a “I’m thinking about you” text message.
10. Write your devotion in the sand on the beach or in chalk on the pavement.
11. Make a phone video of you holding up a series of pages with a love message.
12. ‘Tattoo’ with a pen “I heart U” in a place only your beloved can find.



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