

The Christian Meaning behind 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'

Did you know that the classic **Christmas** carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas" has a Christian meaning behind its lyrics?

Legend has it that this song was first published in a book in England in 1780 and thought to be French in origin. The tune we sing now was composed by Englishman Frederic Austin in 1909.

Christians in England were not allowed to openly practice their faith from 1558 to 1829. For that reason, many believe that this song was a hidden way to teach the beliefs of the Christian faith, a "secret" meaning only known by those in the church.

A Partridge in a Pear Tree—The partridge represents Jesus Christ. The partridge is known to sacrifice itself for the sake of others.

Two Turtle Doves—Two Turtle Doves represent the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments.

Three French Hens—The hens represent faith, hope and love, referring to the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

Four Calling Birds—The calling birds represent the four Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Five Golden Rings—The golden rings represent the five books of the Pentateuch — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy — which is the Old Testament law.

Six Geese A-Laying—The geese represent the six days when God actively created as he rested on the seventh day.

Day One: The light and darkness, and night and day (Genesis 1:3-5)

Day Two: The sky and the atmosphere (Genesis 1:6-8)

Day Three: The land, sea and vegetation (Genesis 1:9-13)

Day Four: The sun, moon, stars and heavenly bodies (Genesis 1:14-19)

Day Five: The birds of the air and the fish of the sea (Genesis 1:20-23)

Day Six: God created land animals and man in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:24-31)

Seven Swans A-Swimming—These are meant to represent the gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord (awe) (Isaiah 11:1-2)

Eight Maids A-Milking—The maids represent the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Nine Ladies Dancing—The ladies dancing represents the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23):

Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control

Ten Lords A-Leaping—The lords a-leaping is the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20):

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. Do not make idols.
3. Do not misuse the Lord’s name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not lie.
10. Do not covet.

11 Pipers Piping—The pipers represented the 11 *faithful* disciples:

Simon Peter, Andrew, James (the son of Zebedee), John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James (the son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, (Judas is not counted here)

12 Drummers Drumming—The drummers represent the 12 points of belief in the Apostles’ Creed:

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
2. and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
3. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;
5. he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead;
6. he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
7. from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and life everlasting.