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Fraternal Benefit Society Since 1897

The Christmas Tree

Today, it's hard for most North Americans to contemplate having a family Christmas without a Christmas tree somewhere. So it may be hard to believe that Christians got along for over 1400 years without using evergreens to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Or that the use of evergreens in midwinter feasts started long before there was Christmas. How a pre-Christian midwinter decoration became one of the most beloved symbols of Christmas is an odd, but fascinating story.

Pre-Christian History - Historically, we know that many religions celebrated midwinter feasts long before the birth of Jesus. As the shortest day of the year, the solstice was a sort of milepost - a sign that things were bound to get warmer and brighter eventually. To celebrate the coming "rebirth" of nature, several pre-Christian cultures brought evergreen plants like fir, holly, and mistletoe indoors to give a "springlike" atmosphere to their homes.

Jesus is born about 6 BC. By AD 200, the story of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection had been spread over much of the known world. Still, most Christians did not celebrate the birth of Jesus as a separate feast day for centuries. For one thing, nobody really knew when Jesus was born (although they knew the anniversary of His death and resurrection, so Easter was celebrated almost from the beginning). Eventually the established church gave up trying to keep their Roman converts from joining in non-Christian midwinter feasts such as Saturnalia. They decided to celebrate the birth of Jesus on the winter solstice (or as close as they could come with their ancient calendars). Christmas eventually emerged as an important Christian Holy Day, second only to Easter. Still, it was well over a thousand years before most Christians began to use evergreens in their Christmas celebrations.

Christmas Trees Emerge - The great reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) is often credited with reintroducing evergreen boughs to midwinter celebrations in Germany, although there are few historical records of Christmas trees as we know them before 1600. The classic German Christmas tree, was a small fir or spruce with relatively sparse decorations and lit candles. In subsequent centuries, as Germans emigrated by the hundreds of thousands to the New World,

they brought their tradition of Christmas greenery with them.

In England, the Puritains had disliked and even outlawed many Christmas traditions. That may help explain why the Christmas tree was slower to catch on in England and parts of North America. As late as the mid 1800s, very few American homes had Christmas trees, although evergreen boughs were occasionally used to brighten midwinter feasts.

The first president reported to bring a Christmas tree into the White House was Franklin Pierce, in 1853. During the late 1800s, Christmas trees grew rapidly, not only in popularity, but also in size - from being a 2-3' tabletop tree to being the 5'-8' trees we use today.

By the early 1900s, the Christmas tree had become an important symbol of Christmas, and few homes were without one. Real candles had been replaced by electric lights, which, unfortunately, were still dangerous once the trees dried out. And trees dried out fast in coal-heated homes. That didn't keep folks from trying to extend the useful life of their Christmas trees, though. Before 1900, it was common for the Christmas tree to go up on Christmas Eve, after the children were in bed, and to come down on or before New Year's Day. But as the tree continuously became a more important part of Christmas, it started appearing earlier and earlier. Families who liked to set their Nativity scenes or electric trains under the trees could hardly be expected to wait until Christmas eve to enjoy such activities. So it became more common for the tree to go up in mid-December and to come down only after becoming an eyesore and serious fire hazard.

According to the story, by 1901 the first Christmas tree farm was started, to the praise of Christmas tree lovers and conservationists alike. Almost all of the millions of cut trees used in North America ever year are now grown on these farms.

If a Christmas tree puts someone in the mood to sing about the birth of Jesus, that can't be all bad.

Facts From Fairy



Thanksgiving has come and gone so quickly. I hope you and your families and friends were able to spend time and enjoy conversations together. Many of us are so busy rushing around with life that we sometimes forget to make time to relax and enjoy each other's company.

With Thanksgiving being late in November the media made everyone aware that we have less shopping days before Christmas this year. A perfect way to beat the rush is to buy your gifts all at one time. It is the perfect time to contact your local agent to purchase CLC life insurance or annuities for your family. With a CLC life insurance policy your family is guaranteed insurability. In addition to the security they will feel, they will automatically receive the fraternal benefit of belonging to a caring society. Call your local agent or contact the Home Office for more information.

Mary Lou Derr, a former promoter and Director on the CLC Board of Directors passed away November 7. She was a mentor and a dear friend to me. She will be missed by CLC, her many friends and family. As she met her challenges her favorite saying was "she was always one step closer to heaven." She has reached her goal and we wish her eternal rest. CLC sends our deepest sympathies to her family and friends.

Alice Hark, a past promoter and a former Director on

CLC's Board of Directors, passed away on November 18. She was a member of the Fostoria Council. She will be missed by family, friends and CLC. CLC sends our deepest sympathies to her family and friends. As we decorate for Christmas, an Advent wreath is placed in the church. I have one on my dining room table as well.

The Advent wreath first appeared in 1839 in Germany. It symbolizes that we need to prepare for the most precious gift of the baby Jesus. The circle is a symbol of God's unending love and eternal life. The evergreen represents life in the midst of winter. As we light an additional candle each week it let's us know we are getting closer to Christ's Birthday. As we celebrate the Advent season please remember the reason for the season.

"This Advent, Lord, come to the manger of my heart. Fill me with Your presence from the very start. As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given, Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from Heaven."

The CLC Board, Office Staff and I wish all of our members and families a Blessed and Safe Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

KofC Spreading Holiday Cheer from Purse BINGO!



KofC Grand Knight Jerry Davidson presenting a check for \$2000 to Upper Sandusky St. Peter CLC members and students.

From One Purse To Another



CLC Co. 86 pres. Barb Grasz presenting Mr. Gerber principal of OLC school in Carey a \$2000 check from the proceeds of purse bingo held with the Upper Sandusky KofC. Also in the picture CLC members Nathan Brodman, Norah Wick, Emily Brodman in back row KofC Grand Knight Jerry Davidson and CLC President Fairy Wagner



Purse BINGO 2019!

Upper Sandusky Council 86 joined with Knight's of Columbus #2050 to hold a purse bingo to support Upper Sandusky St. Peter School and Carey Our Lady of Consolation School in the Upper Sandusky KofC Hall. The KofC members were bingo callers and servers to the bingo players. A special coach purse was donated by CLC member Gayle Alspach and was raffled during the evening to bring awareness to breast cancer. CLC members provided soup and sandwiches for purchase. The event was well attended and enjoyed by all.



Bingo callers, Blake England St. Peter principal and Mike Alspach past KofC Grand Knight



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Christmas Charity for the Homeless

Trotting Heart Photography is a company dedicated to spreading the word of God and donate a portion of each photo session to pursue God's work. This year, CLC has chosen to donate to their cause. Trotting Heart Photography reaches out to the homeless individuals and families living on the streets of Columbus to help make their situation a little less hopeless. Each year the group assembles "blessings baggies" to distribute to the homeless. Items collected are toiletries, gloves, socks, blankets, coats, snacks, water bottles, etc.

Folks who may not have a relationship with God are also invited to assemble the baggies in hopes that the volunteers will walk away with a fuller heart and a desire to start a relationship with God. CLC will be making a donation to purchase items to fill the blessing baggies. Some of us from the Home Office may help with distribution if the time is workable.

Please help us make a difference! Please send your monetary donations to the Home Office by December 31st. Let's help them help more!



Please make all checks payable to CLC.

2020 Scholarship Applications Available Now!

Just a reminder of the Fraternal Benefit for any CLC Member attending a university, college or trade school with the intention of completing an undergraduate, graduate, associate degree or professional requirement. Now is the time to apply for a CLC scholarship. Members are eligible to win a \$1,000.00 scholarship up to two times during their school years. CLC offers 25, \$1,000.00 scholarships a year to members. Members must have held a CLC Life Insurance policy for three years before applying for the scholarship. Eligible students will receive an application in the mail or they may obtain one on theclc.org website.

This is the perfect time to insure your students. The policies will allow them to apply for a scholarship and prepare them for their future. Life insurance makes a great Birthday or Christmas gift and a start for their financial future. Please contact your local agent or the home office at theclc.org or call 1-800-845-0494 for more information.

The Catholic Ladies of Columbia is a Fraternal Benefit Society meeting the needs of individuals by providing secure financial products, fellowship and service to others.