



Connections

Edition #3 – December 2020



McDonell Senior Shares Some Christmas Traditions

I often find that every season brings its own tradition, whether it's the Fourth of July fireworks or the Halloween party my friends throw. This year has been kind of harsh on traditions, especially ones where people get together. So, I thought it would be a good idea to take some time to reflect on Christmas traditions in my life. One of my favorite traditions is when my dad and I pick out the "David Family Christmas Tree" at the local tree farm, and then decorate it with lights and hundreds of ornaments gathered throughout the years. Another is the Christmas music that I listen to. It seems that every jolly song I hear brightens my day and gets me feeling extra joyful. I also love baking cookies with my mom while listening to Christmas music. I love to see all the Christmas lights and decorations on houses, and seeing the Christmas Village at Irvine Park. My family also has a tradition of watching Christmas movies in the weeks leading up to Christmas, one of which being Home Alone. I hope that this season brings you all of the joy that Christmas brings me. On behalf of the Student Ambassadors, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year!

Written by Senior Ann David



Some of the
diapers donated!

A Different Kind of Tradition, *written by Mrs. Jacobson*

Speaking of traditions, the McDonell Area Catholic Schools' student ambassadors have had the tradition of doing an annual diaper drive since around 2007. Every year since then, the students have collected diapers and baby wipes, and donated them to local charities. This year's drive in October & November was exceptionally successful because they ran a rose sale to raise money for purchasing more diapers. They sold 150 dozen roses with proceeds of \$1,125. The diapers went to Catholic Charities, St. Francesca Resource Center, and to Chippewa County in their Foster Care Program and the Public Health Department. While this tradition has not been around like many Christmas traditions, it is a very valuable one benefitting our community. This is an example of having the Christmas spirit even before the season begins.



Christmas Prayer

Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Prayer by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Joy of the Season

“Behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy....For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.” These are the words that the angel of the Lord spoke to the shepherds tending their flocks on Christmas Eve in the Gospel of Luke. The good news that the angel announces to these astounded shepherds is meant to make them joyful. Those who hear about the birth of Our Lord are meant to be filled with joy, just as the birth of any baby brings great joy to those awaiting its arrival. However, the shepherds need to choose for themselves to be joyful, just as they must choose to seek out the Christ child.

As the birth of Our Lord approaches in this very unusual year, some of us might like to excuse ourselves from the message of joy that the angel brought those shepherds. Some of us might think that we have very little to be joyful about this year, perhaps being separated from family and friends at a time when we should be rejoicing together at the coming of Our Savior.

But think about those shepherds and how easily it would have been for them to dismiss the angel's call to rejoice. The angel's news would have had very little practical effect on their lives. Afterward, they would go on living as poor shepherds. Most of them probably weren't around when Jesus began His public ministry. But seeing the miracle of the newborn child sent by God as Savior showed them that God is faithful to His promises and that He had not forgotten about them. Neither has He forgotten about us. His faithfulness is what should cause us to choose joy this season rather than sorrow.

“The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, His mercies are not spent; they are renewed every morning, so great is His faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22-23

Written by Father Hokamp, Middle and High School Chaplain

Saint Francis of Assisi and the Nativity

Saint Francis was born in Assisi, Italy into a life full of riches, but he decided to abandon the rich lifestyle and devote his life to Christ. Saint Francis of Assisi was the patron saint of animals and the founder of the Catholic Church's Franciscan Order. Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first live nativity scene in 1223 in order to develop the worship of Christ. He wanted to help people gain a sense of wonder about the miracles that the Bible records from the first Christmas. He was inspired by his visit to the Holy Land, where he was shown Jesus' traditional birthplace. Saint Francis got permission from Pope Honorius III to set up a manger with hay and two live animals, an ox and donkey, in a cave in the Italian Village of Greccio. At the place of the live manger, Saint Francis then invited the townspeople to come and look at the nativity while he talked about "the babe of Bethlehem." Supposedly Francis was so overcome by emotions that he couldn't say "Jesus." It is also said that the hay that Francis used acquired the power to cure local cattle diseases and pestilences. The nativity's popularity grew from there. Francis' nativity was so popular that soon every church in Italy had its own nativity scene. Nativity scenes started to spread throughout Europe. There is no clear evidence that people actually played Mary and Joseph during Francis' time, or if they just imagined the presence of the figures. Later the scenes would include not just Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, but whole villages. There were figures added to the nativity such as angels, sheep, shepherds, camels, and the three kings who traveled to present gifts to the baby Jesus. Before Francis set up the first nativity, people celebrated Christmas primarily by going to Mass. Little did Francis know his nativity would spread throughout the world.

Written by Sophomore Sydney Retzlaff

Picture by Sixth Grader Chloe Flanagan



FUN AND GAMES

Did You Know?

"Jingle Bells" was the first song to be broadcast from space.



Christmas Word Scramble

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. nanroestm | 11. enihymc |
| 2. antas slauc | 12. wnso amn |
| 3. rats | 13. reenidre |
| 4. lanagrđ | 14. giselh |
| 5. serpents | 15. ryemr |
| 6. rictssahm eret | 16. rtonh lepo |
| 7. danyc eanc | 17. vitantyi |
| 8. vlees | 18. rtrdegpai |
| 9. liaydoh | 19. mec credbe |
| 10. onws | 20. leteoimts |

Answers To Last Edition's
Crossword Puzzle:

ACROSS:

- 3. Maize
- 4. Wishbone
- 9. Native Americans
- 10. Turkey

DOWN:

- 1. Family
- 2. Cornicopia
- 5. Apple pie
- 6. November
- 7. Squash
- 8. Mayflower

WISE-cracks

Q: When does Christmas come before Thanksgiving?

A: In the dictionary

Q: What does a snowman like to eat for breakfast?

A: Frosted Flakes

Q: How much did Santa Claus pay for his sleigh?

A: Nothing - it was on the house!

Q: Where did the reindeer put his money?

A: In a snow bank!

Fun Local Facts

- In 1944, 6000 onion sacks, which holds about one bushel, are distributed to county schools, 4-H clubs and Scout Troops, so the children can collect milkweed seed pods as buoyant filler in "Mae West" life jackets and vests for the military.
- In 1944, Congress appropriates \$500,000 to construct a new Eau Claire City Airport in the town of Hallie.
- In 1953, television station, WEAU in Eau Claire began broadcasting for the first time. Viewers no longer had to try & pick up a weak signal from Minneapolis or Milwaukee.
- In 1955, a four-lane "superhighway" was under construction between Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls in Hallie.
- In 1959, at the age of 19, John Menard Jr. of Wheaton starts a pole barn construction business that grows into one of the largest vendors of home improvement materials in the country.

Behind the Lyrics: Silent Night

In 1818, a roving band of actors arrived at Oberndorf, a village near Salzburg where they were to re-enact the story of Christ's birth. Unfortunately, the St. Nicholas' church organ wasn't working and wouldn't be repaired before Christmas, so the actors presented their Christmas drama in a private home. Their performance put Josef Mohr in a meditative mood. Instead of walking straight to his house that night, Mohr took a longer way home up over a hill overlooking the village. Reveling in majestic silence of the wintry night, Mohr gazed down at the pretty scene. He remembered a poem he had written a few years ago about the night when angels announced the birth of Jesus.

Mohr knew it would make a good carol for his congregation the following evening at their Christmas Eve service. The one problem was that he didn't have any music the poem could be sung with. So, the next day Mohr went to see the church organist, Franz Xaver Gruber. By that evening, Gruber had managed to compose a musical setting for the poem. On Christmas Eve, that little village heard Gruber and Mohr sing their new composition to the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar. In 1863, nearly fifty years after being first sung in German, "Silent Night" was translated into English. Eight years later, that English version made its way into print in Charles Hutchins' Sunday School Hymnal. Today, the words of "Silent Night" are sung around the world in more than 300 different languages.

Written by Junior Kallee LeCloux



Special Christmas Edition: Hidden Meanings Behind Classic Christmas Songs!



The Hidden Meaning Behind the Christmas Song “The Twelve Days of Christmas”

Today around Christmas time, many people decide to turn on the radio and listen to Christmas music. It is always fun to listen to the long complicated song, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. While listening to this song, many people don't realize that there is a hidden meaning behind the song. Although there are many ideas to what the song is about, many scholars believe it was a way to spread Christianity. Each line has a different meaning. For example, the partridge in a pear tree represents Jesus Christ. The most important verse in the song represents the most important person in Catholic faith. The two turtle doves are the Old and New Testaments. The three French hens are Hope, Faith, and Charity, which are the theological virtues. The four calling birds are the four Gospels. The five golden rings are the five books of the Old Testament. The six geese a-laying stands for the six days of creation. The seven swans a-swimming are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes. The nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. The ten lords leaping are the Ten Commandments. The eleven pipers piping are the eleven faithful apostles. Lastly the twelve drummers drumming are the twelve points of the doctrine in the Apostles Creed. Back then, since Christianity was forbidden, the song was a way to spread the faith without people knowing. The lyrics in the song have changed throughout the years mostly because they probably could not get away with saying “Christmas” in every line.

Written by eighth grader Sophie Schmidgall

The Story Behind the Song “O Holy Night”

When someone listens to any song, they really don't think about the story behind it or what it took to make this song come together. The story behind “O Holy Night” is a very interesting story but a good one. This all started in a little French town. The year was 1847, when a man named Cappeau de Roquemaure, a poet, was just doing what a normal poet does, writing poetry. Now, Mr. Roquemaure was well known for his poetry and was very surprised when his parish priest asked him to write a poem for Christmas Mass. When Mr. Roquemaure heard about this, he was very honored to write the poem. He used the Gospel of Luke as his guide to write the poem. He also pictured himself at the Nativity and used that as his inspiration. When Mr. Roquemaure was done writing this poem, he called it "Cantique de Noel".

He thought that this shouldn't just be a poem it should be a song as well. He went to his friend Adolphe Charles Adams for help. Adolphe was the son of a musician and had studied at the Paris Conservatory. When he turned the poem into a song, he began to get fame and then started to get requests to do his work for ballets and orchestras all over the world. Adolphe was Jewish and didn't really view the son of God but he still worked really hard to make this song to please Mr. Roquemaure and the priest. The song was later performed at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. This song was played in France and was soon played all over the world for Catholic Christmas Masses.

Then Mr. Roquemaure walked away from the Church and became a part of a socialist movement and soon the Church found out Adolphe was a Jew. This song was loved and then it became uniformly denounced from the church. The people thought that this song was very unfit for the Church and didn't have any spirit of religion. The Church tried to bury the song but people just kept singing it. Then an American writer brought a whole new view point to the song. John Sullivan Dwight believed that good Christmas songs should be shared with other people. Mr. Dwight said himself about line number three “This line teaches us how to love each other...”. “O Holy Night” became very popular in America, especially in the North because of the Civil War.

Even in France, commoners were still singing the song around town. On Christmas Eve, 1871, Germany and France were in the French-Prussian War, a French soldier jumped out of his base and everything just stopped. He looked up to heaven and sang three verses of "Cantique de Noel". After the French soldier was done, a German soldier got out of his base and started to sing a few verses from "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" by Martin Luther. The fighting in this war stopped for 24 hours and the soldiers were in peace in honor of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, 1906, Reginald Fessenden, spoke through a microphone for the first time and it went through many airways with him hoping lots of people could hear him. By this time Adolphe had died and the other men had aged, the song was being enjoyed all over the world. Some thought it was voices of Angels. Everyone thought it was a Christmas Eve miracle. Then Reginald picked up his violin and started to play “O Holy Night”.

This song is still played and sung today. It is a favorite of many, including my family. Artists all over the world have recorded the song over the years and people of all ages will enjoy this song for many years to come.

Written by 7th grader Delaney Smiskey

A personal message from a student...