

ORIGIN OF "THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"

When written this was a good deal more than just a repetitious melody with pretty phrases and a list of strange gifts.

It was written in England in 1558 as one of the "catechism songs" to help young Catholics learn the tenets of their faith - a memory aid. This was a time when it was difficult for Catholics to practice their faith.

The song's gifts are hidden meanings to the teachings of the faith. The "true love" refers to God Himself. The "me" refers to every baptized person.

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge which feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings.

The other symbols mean the following:

2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments

3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity, the Theological Virtues

4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists

5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which gives the history of man's fall from grace.

6 Geese A-laying = the six days of creation

7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments

8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes

9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments

11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles

12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed

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