

The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas
Office of the Grand Commander
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Subject: Christmas Message

To: The Grand Officers, Past Grand Commanders, Officers and Members of the Constituent Commanderies of Texas

Christmas: The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

Christmas, meant to be a cornerstone of the Christian faith and a celebration of our Savior's birth, has, for many, become a holiday overshadowed by consumerism and materialism. While it may seem to some that the holiday has drifted from its spiritual roots, hints of the profound meaning of the Nativity and its message of hope and salvation remain, ready to be rediscovered.

Consider, for instance, the beloved song *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Though often performed by choirs, carolers, and kids of all ages, it holds a deep Christian meaning within each of its verses:

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... a partridge in a pear tree.

The partridge in the pear tree represents Jesus, the Son of God, whose birth we celebrate on the first day of Christmas. Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge, the only bird willing to die to protect its young.

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... two turtledoves.

These twin birds represent the Old and New Testaments. In this gift, the singer is offered the complete story of the Judeo-Christian faith and God's plan for the world.

On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... three French hens.

To Masons, these birds symbolize the three principal rungs of Jacob's Ladder: faith, hope, and charity (or love). These gifts echo *1 Corinthians 13*, written by the Apostle Paul and are central to the Blue Lodge degrees as well as several degrees in other rites.

On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... four calling birds.

These fowl represent the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the foundation of the New Testament and subject of much of our Knights Templar ritual.

On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... five gold rings.

These rings symbolize the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah or Pentateuch), the foundation of both Jewish and Christian faiths.

On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... six geese a-laying.

This is an interesting allusion, in that each egg represents one of the six days of creation. This symbolizes the time that the world was “hatched” or formed by God, as told in the first story of the Bible.

On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... seven swans a-swimming.

Seven is a deeply symbolic number in Bible and could represent many things. However, these swans are most often attributed to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and compassion. As swans are some of the most beautiful and graceful creatures on earth, they are a perfect symbol of these spiritual gifts.

On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... eight maids a-milking.

As Christ came to save even those on the lowest spoke of fortune’s wheel, this verse conveys His care for all, from the humblest servants to those of royal blood. These eight servants recall the Beatitudes, or blessings given to the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the merciful, those pure of heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... nine ladies dancing.

These dancers symbolize the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

On the tenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... ten lords a-leaping.

These lords represent the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses, the foundation of moral law for both Jews and Christians.

On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... eleven pipers piping.

This verse is the reason I chose to incorporate this song in the Christmas message. It reminds us of the eleven faithful apostles, and of the apostasy of Judas, a theme so important to our ritual.

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... twelve drummers drumming.

The final gift is a direct reference to the Catholic Church and the twelve points of the Apostles’ Creed, which outlines the beliefs of the Christian faith.

The story of the Nativity carries deeper meaning, as well. In the story of the Three Wise Men, the Magi proclaimed through their gifts that all three powers God had ordained in the Old Testament had come together in the birth and person of Jesus Christ and would be fulfilled. Gold proclaimed Him to be our King, the one who would rule over his people (and indeed the whole of creation) forever and ever. Frankincense announced that He would be our High Priest, intervening with God, Himself, on our behalf, offering prayers and intercessions for us. And finally, myrrh reveals to us that our King and Priest, God forever, was somehow a mortal man who would also serve as our prophet, a Savior who would die in the place of his people.

Even the timing of Christmas carries significance. Though scholars debate the exact date of Jesus’ birth, its placement near the winter solstice is symbolic. As the days begin to lengthen,

the birth of Christ symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, bringing hope to the world.

Finally, the traditional colors of Christmas—red and green—hold deep meaning. Red represents the bloodshed in the Hallowed Sacrifice, while the path created through salvation provides the faithful with eternal life which is symbolized in immortal green. The red and white of candy canes, ribbons and bows remind us of the sacrifice of the blood of the lamb, which allows for the forgiveness of sin and washes us “white as snow.”

In reflecting on these examples, we can see how easy it is to lose the significance of Christmas meant to enhance and reaffirm our faith. I hope you learned something new in this reading and rediscover the beauty and depth of Christmas and will approach this holy season with renewed sense of wonder and curiosity.

Let us end with a very direct and simplified version of the Good News:

Jesus’ birth marked the beginning of God’s redemptive plan unfolding on earth. As foretold in prophecy (*Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2*), His incarnation fulfilled God’s promise of a Savior. Born of a virgin (*Matthew 1:23*), He came as Emmanuel, “God with us,” to bring light to a world in darkness (*John 1:9*).

Through His birth, Jesus took on human form (*Philippians 2:6-8*), identifying with humanity to become the perfect sacrifice to redeem our sins. His arrival was the first step toward the cross, where He secured salvation for all who believe.

Thus, Christmas celebrates not just His birth, but the beginning of hope for mankind of receiving eternal life.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

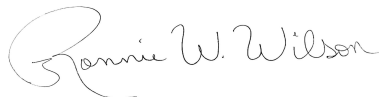
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In His Name and in your service,



Justin C. Bauer
Grand Commander

Attest:



Ronnie W. Wilson
Grand Recorder

