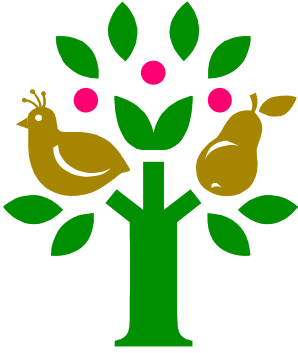


Song "The Twelve Days of Christmas"

Story of its origin – Historian unknown (from internet download)
(Story was also presented by Martha Stewart on her TV show December 1999)



In Christian church tradition, "Christmas" refers to a twelve-day period that starts with Christmas day. This is where "The Twelve Days of Christmas" song originated. When most people hear of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," they think of the song. However, this song had its origins as a teaching tool to instruct young people in the meaning and content of the Christian faith.

From 1558 to 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not able to practice their faith openly, so they had to find other ways to pass on their beliefs. The song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is one example of how they did so.

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is in a sense an allegory. Each of the items in the song represents something of significance in our faith in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The song goes, "On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me..." The "true love" represents God, and the "me" who receives these presents is the Christian.

1. The "partridge in a pear tree" was Jesus Christ who died on a tree as a gift from God.
2. The "two turtle doves" were the Old and New Testaments - another gift from God.
3. The "three French hens" were faith, hope and love - the three gifts of the Spirit that abide.
(I Corinthians 13).
4. The "four calling birds" were the four Gospels which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.
5. The "five golden rings" were the first five books of the Bible, also called the "Books of Moses."
6. The "six geese a-laying" were the six days of creation.
7. The "seven swans a swimming" were the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
(Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4)
8. The "eight maids a milking" were the eight beatitudes. (Matthew 5)
9. The "nine ladies dancing" were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5)
10. The "ten lords a-leaping" were the ten commandments.
11. The "eleven pipers piping" were the eleven faithful disciples.
12. The "twelve drummers drumming" were the twelve points of the Apostles' creed.

Can you name each of the items for each of the twelve days? If not, why not take some time this Christmas to look them up and think about how each applies in your relationship with God. And next time you hear "The Twelve Days of Christmas," consider how this otherwise non-religious sounding song points to God's gift to us on the first Christmas, the Lord Jesus Christ.