



Issue no 38  
Christmas 2025

# Wrexham Clarion

The newsletter of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wrexham – serving the parishes of North and Mid Wales



To make clearly known  
To declare  
To clarify  
To call to prayer



Altarpiece in the church of Saint Mark, Zagreb, Croatia. – ©Zatletic

**TODAY A LIGHT WILL SHINE UPON US,  
FOR THE LORD IS BORN FOR US**

**NADOLIG BENDIGEDIG A  
BLWYDDYN NEWYDD DDA  
A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

*Best wishes and  
Prayers  
+ Peter*



The Rt Rev'd - Y Gwir Barch Peter M Brignall  
Bishop of Wrexham – Esgob Wrexham

LL13 7EW



## CRIB OFFERINGS

In contemporary terms, Mary and Joseph could be an archetypal couple, young - Mary at least - homeless and with a baby, made refugees by circumstance firstly internal and then across borders, for which reasons Bishop Peter has chosen as the recipients of your Christmas Crib Offerings; 'Depaul UK' whose work is grounded in the teachings of 17th-century Catholic reformer St Vincent de Paul. His vision – rooted in compassion, dignity, and putting words into action – inspires them to help young people move out of homelessness and towards a brighter, more secure future.

<https://www.depaul.org.uk/winterappeal>

Registered Charity Number: 802384.

And with an awareness of the ever increased suffering piled upon the people of the Palestinian West Bank, the Bethlehem Care and Hospice Trust's Hospice at Home, a unique Sheffield-based licensed palliative care provider in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) [www.bethlehemcareandhospicetrust.org](http://www.bethlehemcareandhospicetrust.org)  
Registered Charity Number 1158406

*Wishing all our readers a very  
happy and holy Christmas,  
and a Blessed New Year  
from "The Clarion"*

## The Stranger in our Midst

One day a stranger came to a city and asked of a group of boys playing where he might find the famous statue. They told him, and he went on his way. Then later he asked a citizen, who again directed him, having said "I am the one who thought of creating the statue". Then a third time he asked directions. "If anyone knows, I should -I constructed the statue" was the reply. The stranger contemplated the statue and then retraced his steps. He acknowledged the citizens as he went, and then passed the boys, still playing. One boy looked at the stranger, and then shouted to his companions "Look, boys. That is the man of the statue".

In truth, the man whom they had honoured, and toiled to create a memory, had walked and talked with them, and they knew him not.

(D. Williamson)



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Christ as God is the fatherland where we are going. Christ as man is the way by which we go  
He became what we are that he might make us what he is.

(St Augustine of Hippo)

(St Athanasius of Alexandria)

'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' is a snivelling modern invention with no warrant in the Gospels

(George Bernard Shaw)

Two buckets were discussing their state of life. "It's a miserable life. No matter how full I am when I come out of the well, I always return empty".  
"Oh, dear", replied the other. "To me, it is always wonderful that no matter how many times I return to the well, I always come out full"



### January 1<sup>st</sup> - Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God

Centuries ago, a Protestant clergyman was visiting an orphanage and the children were reciting their prayers. One little boy who had been to a Catholic school finished the Our Father and started "Hail, Mary". "No", said the clergyman, "We don't need to hear about her. Go on to the Creed". The boy did so, then stopped when he came to ...'and born of the...'. "Here she comes again... what shall I do now, Sir?" he asked. *Indeed, we cannot have Jesus without Mary!*

In much of continental Europe public nativity scenes (*presepio*) are common in town squares as well as in churches. They depict hills and meadows, flocks of sheep, hosts of angels and the magi's caravan in the distance and a city centre thronged with people all focused on the stable and hay stall in which the infant Saviour lies.

The opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* by Gian Carlo Menotti was inspired by one such scene. It is one of my most enjoyed and delightful interpretations of the coming of the Magi in the Christmas story and I commend it to you as part of your Christmas entertainment.\*

In its simplicity, it tells the story of a poor, crippled shepherd boy named Amahl living with his widowed mother. Amahl is prone to tell tall tales and not always telling his mother the truth, so when he tells her there is a star the size of a window and now one, two, three kings knocking on their door it is not surprising he is not believed.

But it is true, and they are visited by three Magi seeking shelter for the night as they journey to Bethlehem to see the newborn baby Jesus. With the help of neighbours, food and shelter are given and then the wonder of the story begins to unfold, which I leave to you to discover for yourselves, but it is a joyful, humorous telling of not so unlikely events and the depiction of the worst and best of human nature that inspires hope.

Hope is what we have concentrated upon this Jubilee Year with the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'. A hope that is to be in our hearts in the daily events of our lives, but equally a hope that we are to bring to the world especially those dark places where the light of Christ is yet to shine or must be fanned into a living flame, or ignited again having been extinguished by the evil deeds of men and women, governments or institutions, by violence or stealth.

As the fathers of the Second Vatican Council observed: *"In every age, the Church has the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. In this way, in language adapted to every generation, she can respond to people's persistent questions about the meaning of this present life and the life to come and how one is related to the other."*

One of the signs of our time is the recognition and identification of the yearning of human hearts in need of God's saving presence.

May this Christmas truly be a celebration of the coming of God, present in humanity in the birth, life, death and resurrection of his Son and the hope held out to humanity of a share in his Father's Kingdom: a hope born of love for us and which does not deceive or disappoint. What we have professed, rehearsed and celebrated throughout the last year is to be the refreshed standard for our lives and the life of the Church throughout the years to come.

Please be assured of my continued prayer for you and your family this Christmas. May it be for you all a time of blessing, joy and hope and know that Mass on Christmas night will be celebrated for your intentions.

Happy Christmas,

*† Peter*

\* *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm1Api92hu0>

or a production set in Africa by Baraka Opera Kenya

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cryPpYGpeDo>

It is a pity about the advertisements!

## 100 NATIVITY SCENES IN THE VATICAN

The eighth edition of this exhibition featuring nativity scenes (*presepio*) from around the world was inaugurated on 8<sup>th</sup> December and forms part of the cultural event series, 'Jubilee is Culture.'

The International Exhibition is under the left colonnade of St. Peter's Square and features pieces made by artists from various parts of the world, each expressing their artistry through creative versions of Nativity scenes.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation and head of the Jubilee organisation, inaugurated the exhibition. A traditional folkloric performance organised by the Embassy of Mexico to the Holy See also featured.

About 23 countries from across the globe showcase 132 nativity scenes. Some include Croatia, Romania, Peru, Eritrea, and Taiwan. A wide variety of materials such as Japanese paper, silk, resin, wool, coconut and banana fibres, and glass have been used in the nativity scenes.

One has been designed on the front of an ATAC bus; another is made from a tannery drum. The exhibition showcases a number of mechanical nativity scenes and a large traditional Mexican rendition as well.

This is just one of a number of Nativity Scene exhibitions around the world. You can use your online search to discover more and to see pictures and videos.

Many years ago, before mobile phones, in a small country village, the parish prepared for a Nativity Play. The vicar went to town to get a banner for display. Unfortunately, he forgot the measurements, so he telegraphed his wife for details.

The telegraph clerk fainted as she read the reply:

"Unto Us a Child is Born – seven feet six inches by one foot three"

The dialogue of the school nativity play ad-libbed by a class of nine year olds opened with the scene at the inn. Joseph asks for a room overlooking Bethlehem.

*Innkeeper:* "Can't you see the 'No Vacancy' sign?"

*Joseph:* "Yes, but can't you see that my wife is expecting a baby any minute?"

*Innkeeper:* "Well, that's not my fault."

*Joseph:* "Well, it's not mine, either"





## Gospel Year of Matthew

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly.

But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel" -which means, God with us.

*Matthew 1:18-23 ESV-CE*

### THE POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS

Every month Pope Leo entrusts his Worldwide Prayer Network with prayer intentions that express his great concerns for humanity and for the mission of the Church. His [monthly prayer intention](#) is a global summons to transform our prayers into "concrete actions"; it is a compass for the mission.

It summarises his action plan to mobilise us each month, through prayer and action, for a proposition which invites us to build a more humane and caring world.

These prayer intentions are the product of a long process of discernment within the Church, in various countries around the world, encompassing proposals from various dicasteries, congregations and services of the Holy See. When the process concludes, after several months, the Pope, having received the proposals, takes time to pray and discern with regard to the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church. He then entrusts his twelve prayer intentions to all the faithful. They are guidelines for our life and mission.

#### Offering Prayer

Good Father, I know you are with me. Here I am on this new day. Place my heart once more next to the Heart of your Son Jesus, who is giving himself for me and who comes to me in the Eucharist. May your Holy Spirit make me his friend and apostle, available for his mission of compassion.

I place in your hands my joys and hopes, my works and sufferings, everything that I am and have, in communion with my brothers and sisters of this Worldwide Prayer Network. With Mary, I offer you my day for the mission of the Church and for the prayer intentions of the Pope and my Bishop for this month. Amen.

### Commentary:

The historical trustworthiness of the Christian Gospels is an important issue for the Church. Vatican II (1965) restated the Church's enduring conviction: the NT Gospels faithfully transmit the historical truth about Jesus, his teaching, and his mighty works (*Dei verbum*, 19). Nevertheless, scholars sometimes question whether the Gospel writers intended to record history at all. Some claim that Matthew's Infancy narrative is a prime example of this. Matthew, it is said, did not recount the events of Jesus' birth in the strict sense.

Of what we can be sure is that Matthew's infancy narrative is both theological and historical. He uses the OT as confirmation of his story, not its foundation. He intends readers to view Jesus' early life as real events with real characters. For Matthew, Jesus himself holds the key to the OT, and his coming marks a new era in salvation history that gathers up all of God's promises and brings them to fulfilment. The historical reliability of the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel is consistent with Catholic tradition and the sound principles of biblical and historical study.

*(Ignatius RSV Study Bible Ignatius Press ©2024)*

### Reflection Prayer:

It is right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For in the mystery of the Word made flesh  
a new light of your glory has shone upon the eyes of our mind,  
so that, as we recognise in him God made visible,  
we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible.

*(Preface I of the Nativity of the Lord  
. Roman Missal ©2010 ICEL)*

### POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION –

#### December

For Christians in areas of conflict.

Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope.

#### January

For prayer with the Word of God

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

### THE CYCLE OF PRAYER:

During Ordinary Advent and Christmastide, we are invited to pray  
for Migrants and Refugees and  
for Expectant Mothers

## Compliments of the Season Quiz Answers (Look at the Back Page, first!!)

1. Capricorn
2. Champagne coupe. It was actually created in 1663 (c100 years before Marie Antoinette)
3. The Mistle thrush
4. Kiritimati island (Christmas Island, in Kiribati)
5. American Samoa and Niue. (Baker Island uninhabited)
6. Rafter However other possible answers are:  
**Gaggle:** Sometimes used for domesticated turkeys  
**Flock:** Commonly used for wild turkeys.  
**Run:** Another term for wild turkeys.  
**Posse:** Refers to a group of male wild turkeys.  
**Bachelors:** Used during the breeding season for male wild turkeys  
**Gang or Mob:** Terms for groups of adult male turkeys.  
**Leks:** Groups of males displaying to attract females.  
**Clutch or Poul:** Terms for groups of female turkeys or young turkeys.
7. Poul
8. RSPB in 1898 (but not continued, so UNICEF in 1949 is given the 'honour')
9. 364 (actually enough to reach the following year!)
10. Humans – 140
11. Birds 184. (Note, it does NOT add up to 364, because Five gold rings are not human or birds, on 8 days = 40)
12. Mark (begins with the Baptism) and John
13. a) April (6<sup>th</sup>) b) September 1<sup>st</sup> c) October d) November/December, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent
14. Six
15. A grape -known as *las doce uvas de la suerte* 'good fortune and prosperity'
16. 'Apostles of Jesus'; 'Carmelites of Mary Immaculate'; 'Missionaries of St Paul'; 'Oblates of Mary Immaculate'; 'Society of Jesus'; 'Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy'; 'Vincentian Fathers'. (source; *Diocesan Year Book*)
17. Forthcoming weather in the shipping forecast
18. Visibility in the shipping forecast.
19. A frog.
20. a) The idol built when Moses went up Mt Sinai b) In Greek mythology, a period of great happiness; c) symbol of authority and power, stolen by Jason; d) a natural estuary in Istanbul; e) Drake's ship of circumnavigation (began as 'Pelican'); f) the strait in San Francisco; g) treat others as you wish to be treated.
21. GK Chesterton; JB Priestley; TS Eliot; TE Lawrence; AA Milne; WH Auden; EM Forster.
22. P.G. Wodehouse (Jeeves and Wooster)
23. William Ewart Gladstone. (Hawarden Castle)
24. Capability Brown, the Landscape gardener
25. 'Satchmo'
26. Thomas Stearns Eliot (Murder in the Cathedral)
27. Alice (Lewis Carroll); Charles Lutwidge (Dodgson)

## A Visit From St. Nicholas

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
 Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
 The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
 In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.  
 The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
 While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;  
 And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
 Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap  
 When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
 I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.  
 Away to the window I flew like a flash  
 Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
 The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow  
 Gave the luster of midday to objects below,  
 When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
 But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,  
 With a little old driver, so lively and quick,  
 I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.  
 More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
 And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;  
 "Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!  
 On, Comet, on Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!  
 To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!  
 Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"  
 As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
 When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,  
 So up to the housetop the coursers they flew,  
 With a sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas, too.  
 And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof  
 The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
 As I drew in my head, and was turning around,  
 Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.  
 He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,  
 And his clothes were all covered with ashes and soot;  
 A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
 And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.  
 His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!  
 His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!  
 His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
 And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.  
 The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
 And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.  
 He had a broad face and a little round belly  
 That shook, when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.  
 He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
 And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.  
 A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
 Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.  
 He spoke not a word, but went straight to work  
 And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,  
 And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
 And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.  
 He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,  
 And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.  
 But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,  
 "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

by Clement Clark Moore



St Mary of the Angels Church,  
Llanfairfechan  
71st anniversary

# In the Spotlight



Parish Priest,  
Fr. Franklin Ebuka Umekachikelu MSP,

The parishioners marked the opening of their beloved parish church. Despite the persistent rain, spirits remained high, and the community came together with gratitude to honour more than seven decades of faith, fellowship, and God's unfailing goodness.

During the anniversary Mass, the offered a stirring homily inspired by *Psalm 122*: "Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord." He reminded the faithful that joy has always been at the heart of their Christian journey, and that the anniversary coinciding with the First Sunday of Advent invites renewed gratitude and hope.

"For 71 years," he reflected, "God has gathered us in this sacred place, through trials and triumphs, through generations of faithful worship. Each time we come into the Lord's house, we come not only to pray but to be renewed, strengthened, and sent forth as witnesses of his love."

He encouraged the parishioners to embrace Advent as a season of fresh expectation: a time to deepen their longing for Christ and to prepare room for Him in their hearts, families, and parish community. Just as ancient pilgrims ascended to Jerusalem with rejoicing, the parish today is invited to walk forward with renewed faith and joyful anticipation.

Fr. Ebuka concluded by reminding the congregation that **the Church is far more than a building**; it is a spiritual home and a family that God has sustained for 71 years. He urged them to step confidently into the new liturgical year with unity, hope, and trust in the Lord's coming.



The Exterior



The Interior



Anne Oliver with Sr Patris and Fr Ebuka



**Anne Oliver**, one of the pioneer parishioners who witnessed the church's opening shared the celebration after Mass. With a smile, she recalled the memorable Monday morning of 29 November 1954, when Bishop Petit of Menevia blessed and opened the new Church at Llanfairfechan assisted by Very Rev. J. Thomson, Canon J. Milan, Msgr Cashman, Frs Dunstan, Malachy, Edward, Edwin, Egbert, Aidan, Edmund, Paulinus and Harold.

Anne also shared a fascinating glimpse into the parish's early days. Mass, she noted, was first celebrated in Llanfairfechan in **1917**, held in a variety of temporary locations, a house, a pavilion, a casino, a hotel, a school, a café, and eventually the local council chamber. These humble beginnings served a small Catholic community, many of whom walked long distances to Penmaenmawr and back for Mass on other Sundays.

**Mr. Arthur Hopkinson**, sacristan and maintenance manager, expressed thanks to all who contribute to the life of the parish. He recalled how the foundation of the present church was laid through generous gifts, beginning with a £500 donation from Mrs. Thomas of Llanfairfechan in 1932, and later supported by friends across the USA, Ireland, Canada, England, and Scotland. These contributions, gathered through the determined efforts of Fr. Etherbert, the then district administrator, made the construction of the church possible.

As the parish celebrates 71 years, it looks forward with gratitude for its rich history and renewed dedication to the mission that has sustained it for generations. With joyful hearts and steadfast faith, they continue to echo the psalmist: "**Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**"



## Around and About in the Diocese

### Bishop's Engagements

#### December

24 <sup>th</sup> am	Christmas Masses	HMP Berwyn
Midnight	The Nativity of the Lord	Cathedral
25 <sup>th</sup> 9.00am	Christmas Day Mass	Coedpoeth
10.30am	Christmas Day Mass	Cathedral
27 <sup>th</sup> 11.00am	Altar Servers Mass	Cathedral
28 <sup>th</sup> 10.30am	Feast of the Holy Family	Cathedral
2.30pm	Mass in Syro-Malabar Rite.	
	Holy Trinity, Rhosyllen	
30 <sup>th</sup> 11.00am	Mass for the Feast of the Holy Family	
	Holy Family Convent	

#### January

1 <sup>st</sup> 10.30am	New Year's Day Mass	Cathedral
6 <sup>th</sup> 10.30am	Mass of the Epiphany	Cathedral



### ALTAR SERVERS' MASS

Bishop Peter invites the Diocese's Altar Servers to join him for the celebration Mass for the Guild of St. Stephen and to renew their commitment to serving at the Altar on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> December at 11.00am in St.

Mary's Cathedral.

If there are any servers to be enrolled into the Guild of St. Stephen that day, please let the Cathedral Office [priestwrexhamcathedral@rcdwxm.org.uk](mailto:priestwrexhamcathedral@rcdwxm.org.uk) or [secretarywrexhamcathedral@rcdwxm.org.uk](mailto:secretarywrexhamcathedral@rcdwxm.org.uk) know immediately in order that medals and membership cards can be prepared.

Following the Mass there will be a 'Pizza Lunch' for all servers in the Cathedral Hall. To help defray the costs a small cover charge will be made for the lunch.

### Theology Study Course

one year programme In-person

#### School of Public Theology

Discover key ideas for engaging theologically with society, and learn the skills needed to take part in the public theological conversation. Includes 6 courses, 4 study days, and written work.

Starting on 10 January 2026 (Saturday)



Click on the link below

[https://londonjesuitcentre.churchsuite.com/events/m69dosnd?mc\\_cid=2ee58faa83&mc\\_eid=03917f03cb](https://londonjesuitcentre.churchsuite.com/events/m69dosnd?mc_cid=2ee58faa83&mc_eid=03917f03cb)

Financial support from the Diocese is available to participants, please contact the Bishop's Office: [pa@rcdwxm.org.uk](mailto:pa@rcdwxm.org.uk)



### THE CATHOLIC UNION

Bishop Peter suggests that to keep up to date with the interface between religious life and faith, and public life and politics, the weekly briefing from the Catholic Union of Great Britain is an invaluable source of news and items currently in the public forum and about which we need to be informed and prepared to act:

[info@catholicunion.org.uk](mailto:info@catholicunion.org.uk)

### Events and Invitations

#### LOOKING AHEAD - EVENTS AND INVITATIONS

#### DECEMBER

Thu 25 <sup>th</sup>	Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Sat 27 <sup>th</sup>	Guild of St. Stephen Annual Mass for Altar Servers (after the Feast of St. Stephen)
Sun 28 <sup>th</sup>	Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
	Formal Closing of the Holy Year –
	10.30 am. St. Mary's Cathedral

#### 2026 JANUARY

Thu 1 <sup>st</sup>	Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God.
Tue 6 <sup>th</sup>	Solemnity of The Epiphany of the Lord
Sun 18 <sup>th</sup>	Santo Niño Blessing –
	10.30am Mass St. Mary's Cathedral

### CELEBRATION

On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December the BBC Radio Wales "Celebration" programme will be a reflection on the close of the Jubilee Year and the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph led by Bishop Peter. It can be heard that day on the radio at 07.33 and 19.29 or online (BBC SOUNDS (Wales)) any time after the morning broadcast.



### JUBILEE YEAR 2025

On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December, the Feast of the Holy Family the jubilee Year will be closed with hundreds of ceremonies and Masses in cathedrals across the world. That closing for us will take place at the Cathedral Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, Wrexham at 10.30 am and to which all are welcome, indeed encouraged by the Holy Father to attend.

On 27<sup>th</sup> December 2025 Pope Leo will close the Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran and the following day will close the Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls and on the Feast of the Epiphany 6 January 2026 he will close the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, formally concluding the Jubilee Year. An extensive range of articles and resources are available on the Bishops' Conference website: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/jubilee-2025/>

### A Beautiful Idea Turns Sour

To the Christian, the word 'Bethlehem' conjures up the birth of Jesus and peace and harmony. In 1274, a hospital was founded in England and named "St Mary of Bethlehem" as a tribute to the healing nature of Jesus, and his blessed Mother. However, two centuries later the patients were no longer medically ill, but mentally ill, and at that time with little hope of cure. Thus the noise and confusion that reigned there became known throughout the country. Through linguistic contraction, and corruption, as words always change, the name became "Bedlam" - a word still in use today

## "The 12 Days of Christmas" True or False?

We know that many traditional songs have a basis in historical fact or legend: "Ring-a-ring o' roses", in the plague; "Humpty Dumpty", possibly the Siege of Gloucester. What about "The 12 Days of Christmas"? Perhaps it annoyed you because it sounded too 'secular'! For many years, after the Puritans, it was forbidden to sing religious songs in public. Was this song sung to circumvent the ban? Maybe it has a deeper theological significance. **Here is a possible interpretation:**

**1. A Partridge in a Pear Tree** The partridge represents Jesus, the Son of God, whose birthday we celebrate on the first day of Christmas. Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge, the only British bird that will die to protect its young.

**2. Two Turtledoves** These twin birds represent the **Old** and **New Testaments**. So, in this gift, the singer finds the complete story of the Christian faith and God's plan for the world. The doves are the biblical roadmap that is available to everyone.

**3. Three French Hens** These birds represent  
**faith, hope, love.**

This gift refers to 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter about love written by the Apostle Paul. It also represents the Holy Trinity:  
**Father, Son, Holy Spirit**

**4. Four Calling Birds.** One of the easiest facets of the song's code to figure out: these fowl are the four Gospels — the Evangelists **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.**

**5. Five Gold Rings** The gift of the rings represents the first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch.

<b>Genesis</b>	<b>Exodus</b>	<b>Leviticus</b>
<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Deuteronomy</b>	

**6. Six Geese a-Laying** The Creation. Each 'egg' is a day when God "hatched" or formed the world.  
the heavens and the earth  
the sky and seas  
the land and plants  
the sun, moon, and stars  
fish and birds  
and animals and man

**7. Seven Swans a-Swimming** The seven **gifts of the Holy Spirit:**

<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Exhortation</b>
<b>Giving</b>	<b>Leading</b>	<b>Compassion</b>	

**8. Eight Maids-a-Milking** The Eight Maids represent the **Beatitudes**, from Matthew 5:3-10: Blessed are...

The poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Those who mourn: for they shall be comforted.  
The meek: for they shall inherit the earth.  
Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled.  
The merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.  
The pure in heart: for they shall see God.  
The peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God.  
They who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**9 Nine Ladies Dancing** The **Fruits of the Spirit** include:

<b>Love</b>	<b>Joy</b>	<b>Peace</b>
<b>Patience</b>	<b>Kindness</b>	<b>Goodness</b>
<b>Faithfulness</b>	<b>Gentleness</b>	<b>Self-control</b>

**10. Ten Lords A-leaping.** As lords were the judges, this code for the Ten Commandments was fairly straightforward to Christians.

I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

(You shall love your neighbour as yourself) Mt 22:39)

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honour your father and your mother.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

**11. Eleven Pipers Piping** the Eleven Pipers signify the eleven **Faithful Disciples:**

<b>Simon (named Peter)</b>	<b>Andrew</b>	<b>James</b>
<b>John</b>	<b>Philip</b>	<b>Bartholomew</b>
<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Thomas</b>	<b>James, (son of Alphaeus)</b>
<b>Simon, (the Zealot)</b>		<b>Jude, (son of James)</b>

**12. Twelve Drummers Drumming**

The drummers are the 12 points of **doctrine** in the Apostles' Creed.

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

2. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

3. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

4. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

5. He descended into hell. On the third day, He rose again.

6. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

7. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,

9. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,

10. the forgiveness of sins,

11. the resurrection of the body,

12. and life everlasting.

### And the Pear Tree?

That, of course, represents the Cross.

The 'tree' on which Jesus was crucified, cleverly hidden in the most British of trees!

### A 'Partridge' in a 'Pear Tree'

Now that you have seen this, perhaps you will listen to the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" with a new insight and it would be well each time to celebrate the blessings of being able to openly and wholeheartedly worship and celebrate in freedom!



**THE BACK PAGE**  
**A 'gallimaufry of serendipity'**

**Compliments of the Season**

**-A quiz for Christmas and the New Year**

1. What is the birth sign for people born on 25<sup>th</sup> December or 1<sup>st</sup> January?
2. What celebratory receptacle is claimed (falsely) to have been modelled on the breast of Marie Antoinette?
3. Which creature, noted for feeding on berries is linked to mistletoe?
4. Which is the first inhabited place to celebrate the New Year?
5. And which the last?
6. What is the collective noun for Turkeys?
7. What is a baby turkey called, if not a chick?
8. Which charity was the first to introduce charity Christmas cards?
9. In the song "The 12 days of Christmas", gifts included: 12 drummers, 11 pipers, 10 lords, 9 ladies, 8 maids, 7 swans, 6 geese, 5 rings, 4 birds, 3 hens, 2 doves, 1 partridge. Excluding the pear tree, how many gifts were given?
10. How many were humans?
11. How many were birds?
12. Of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which one does NOT include a nativity narrative?
13. In which months do the following 'new years' usually occur? a) financial b) academic c) legal d) liturgical
14. How many sides or spikes does a snowflake have?
15. As the clock strikes midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> December, what do Spaniards eat for each chime?
16. Give in full: AJ; CMI; MSP; OMI; SJ; SMMM; VC
17. If 'imminent' is less than 6, and 'soon' is 6 to 12, what is 'later'? Explain.
18. If 'poor' is less than 2, and 'good' is more than 5, what is it?
19. What word is an indentation in a brick, part of a horse's hoof, an amphibian, a loop and fastening on a military coat, and the crossover point in a railway track?
20. Identify: a) The Golden Calf. b) The Golden Age  
c) The Golden Fleece d) The Golden Horn e) The Golden Hind  
f) The Golden Gate g) The Golden Rule
21. Name the authors: a) G.K. b) J.B. c) T.S. d) T.E. e) A.A. f) W.H. g) E.M.
22. Whose Christian names are Pelham Granville?
23. Whose middle name was Ewart?
24. How was Lancelot Brown better known?
25. What was the nickname of Louis Armstrong?
26. Whose middle name was 'Stearns'?
27. C.L. Dodgson wrote about which little girl, and what do C.L stand for?

**A Boy Learns a Lesson**

In about my tenth year, as Christmas approached, I longed for an electric train. The times were those of economic depression, yet Mother and Dad purchased for me a lovely electric train.

Christmas morning bright and early, I thrilled when I noticed my train. The next few hours were devoted to operating the transformer and watching the engine pull its cars forward—then backward - around the track.

Mother said that she had purchased a wind-up train for Widow Hansen's boy, Mark, who lived down the lane at Gale Street. As I looked at his train, I noted a tanker car which I much admired. I put up such a fuss that my mother succumbed to my pleadings and gave me the tanker car. I put it with my train set and felt pleased.

Mother and I took the remaining cars and the engine down to Mark Hansen. The young boy was a year or two older than I. He had never anticipated such a gift. He was thrilled beyond words. He wound the key in his engine, it not being electric nor expensive like mine, and was overjoyed as the engine and three cars, plus a caboose, went around the track.

I felt a horrible sense of guilt as I returned home. The tanker car no longer appealed to me. Suddenly, I took the tanker car in my hand, plus an additional car of my own, and ran all the way down to Gale Street and proudly announced to Mark, "We forgot to bring two cars which belong to your train."

I don't know when a deed had made me feel any better than that experience as a ten-year old boy.

*by Thomas S. Monson*

**Children's Joke Corner-**

**(or the ones you wish I hadn't.... It's a cracker!!)**

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?	Mince spy
What do snowmen have on their heads?	Ice caps
What do you call a snowman that can walk?	Snowmobile
What do you call an old snowman?	Water
Why are Christmas trees bad at sewing?	They are always dropping their needles
What do you call a dog who works for Santa?	Santa Paws
How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?	Nothing – it was on the house
What happens to a naughty elf?	Santa gives it the sack
Why do birds fly south for Christmas?	It's too far to walk
Why didn't the skeleton go to the Christmas party?	It had no body to go with
Why was the snowman looking through the carrots?	He was picking his nose



What is every parent's favourite carol?  
Silent night

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