

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

On the First Day of Christmas: A Partridge in a Pear Tree

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, whose birthday we celebrate on December 25, the first day of Christmas. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge that feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, recalling the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but you would not have it so" (Luke 13:34)

On the Second Day of Christmas: Two Turtle Doves

The Old and New Testaments, which together bear witness to God's self-revelation in history and the creation of a people to tell the Story of God to the world.

On the Third Day of Christmas: Three French Hens

The Three Theological Virtues: 1) Faith, 2) Hope, and 3) Love (1 Corinthians 13:13)

On the Fourth Day of Christmas: Four Calling Birds

The Four Gospels: 1) Matthew, 2) Mark, 3) Luke, and 4) John, which proclaim the Good News of God's reconciliation of the world to Himself in Jesus Christ.

On the Fifth Day of Christmas: Five Gold Rings

The first Five Books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch: 1) Genesis, 2) Exodus, 3) Leviticus, 4) Numbers, and 5) Deuteronomy, which gives the history of humanity's sinful failure and God's response of grace in the creation of a people to be a light to the world.

On the Sixth Day of Christmas: Six Geese A-Laying

The six days of creation that confesses God as Creator and Sustainer of the world (Genesis 1).

On the Seventh Day of Christmas: Seven Swans A-Swimming

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: 1) prophecy, 2) ministry, 3) teaching, 4) exhortation, 5) giving, 6) leading, and 7) compassion (Romans 12:6-8; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

On the Eighth Day of Christmas: Eight Maids A-Milking

The eight Beatitudes: 1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, 2) those who mourn, 3) the meek, 4) those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, 5) the merciful, 6) the pure in heart, 7) the peacemakers, 8) those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. (Matthew 5:3-10)

On the Ninth Day of Christmas: Nine Ladies Dancing

The nine Fruit of the Holy Spirit: 1) love, 2) joy, 3) peace, 4) patience, 5) kindness, 6) generosity, 7) faithfulness, 8) gentleness, and 9) self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

On the Tenth Day of Christmas: Ten Lords A-Leaping

The ten commandments: 1) You shall have no other gods before me; 2) Do not make an idol; 3) Do not take God's name in vain; 4) Remember the Sabbath Day; 5) Honor your father and mother; 6) Do not murder; 7) Do not commit adultery; 8) Do not steal; 9) Do not bear false witness; 10) Do not covet. (Exodus 20:1-17)

On the Eleventh Day of Christmas: Eleven Pipers Piping

The eleven Faithful Apostles: 1) Simon Peter, 2) Andrew, 3) James, 4) John, 5) Philip, 6) Bartholomew, 7) Matthew, 8) Thomas, 9) James bar Alphaeus, 10) Simon the Zealot, 11) Judas bar James. (Luke 6:14-16). The list does not include the twelfth disciple, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders and the Romans.

On the Twelfth Day of Christmas: Twelve Drummers Drumming

The twelve 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. He descended into hell [the grave]. 5) On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 6) He will come again to judge the living and the dead. 7) I believe in the Holy Spirit, 8) the holy catholic Church, 9) the communion of saints, 10) the forgiveness of sins, 11) the resurrection of the body, 12) and life everlasting.

