

## Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

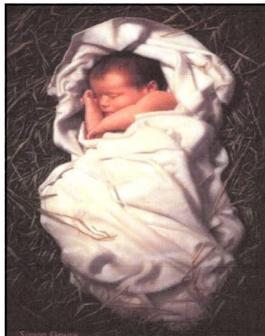
*\*And the angel said to them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for, this day, is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. Luke 2:10-14*

*The long-awaited Messiah is born, and His Nativity is filled with Mystery. Did you know that “Bethlehem” means “House of Bread”? Yes, the Bread of Life, the Living Bread from Heaven, was born in a town called “House of Bread, and was laid in a manger. St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (a.k.a. Gregory of Neocaesares). A.D. 213-ca. 270, describes the significance of the manger in his Homily on the Annunciation:*

*In the board from which cattle eat was laid the heavenly Bread, in order that He might provide participation in spiritual sustenance for men who live like the beasts of the earth.*

*The Feast of the Nativity is a most joyous one that celebrates the incredible reality that the Second Person of the Trinity was born of a Virgin so He could redeem us. “It was He, the Infant of days, that could appease, O Lord, the Ancient of Days,” wrote St. Ephraem the Syrian and Doctor of the Church.*

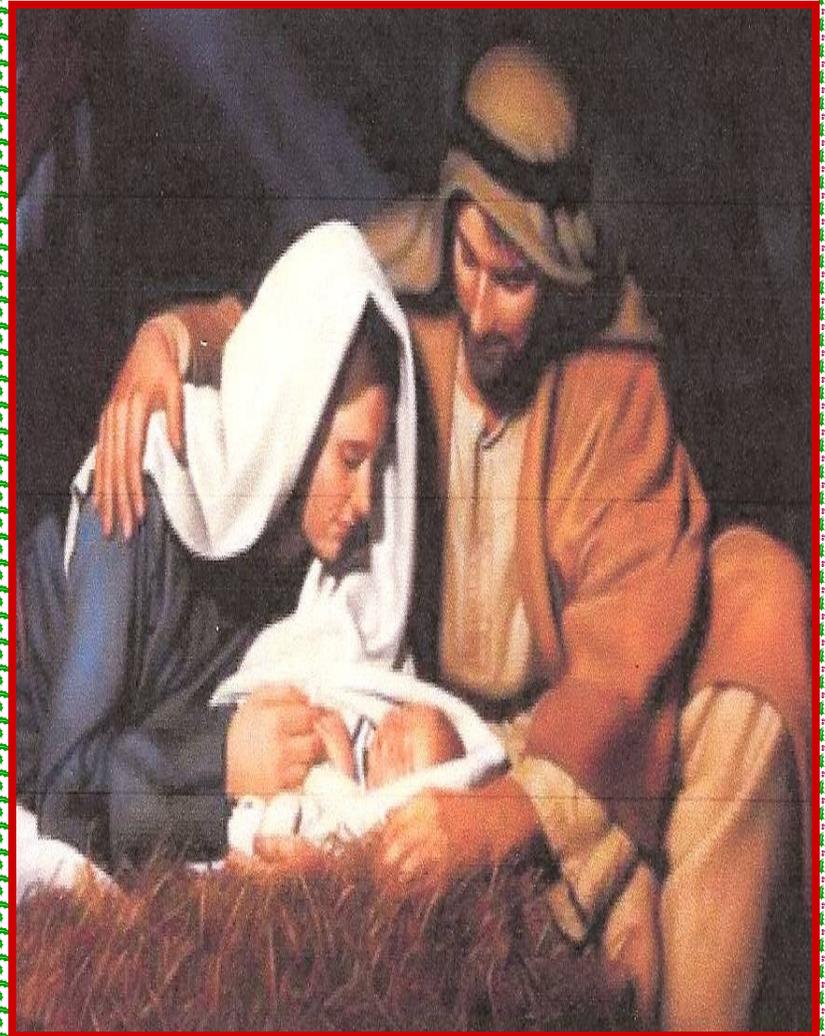
*\*(excerpted from [fisheaters.com/customschristmas2.html](http://fisheaters.com/customschristmas2.html))*



***They wrapped Him in swaddling clothes  
and laid Him in a manger.***

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## *Christmas..... A Time of Peace*



***Christ is born in Bethlehem,  
Alleluia!***

*(words of the angels to the shepherds in Luke 2:10-14)*

***THE TIME HAS COME  
TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS***

*\*If* Advent preparations have been handled well, the house should be clean, work should be done, and things should be fresh and ready for the days of rejoicing ahead.

Christmas is a period where everyone puts aside their worldly stresses and problems and engage in feasting and giving and sharing. People all over the world share with the less privileged, and families dispersed around the world meet again. For a few days every year, we can allow ourselves to just relax and have a great time with our families and friends. So the history of Christmas, unlike the history of so many other human things, is consistently a pleasant one.

Once the sun goes down on Christmas Eve, the Yule log is lit in the fireplace. Back when homes had great fireplaces, fires were lit on Christmas Eve using logs so huge as to be able to burn for all the days of Christmas. These Yule logs now tend to be much smaller, but the traditions surrounding them remain: the fire on Christmas Eve should be lit using a piece of last years Yule Log which has been stored in a dry place of the house. The Yule log is lit with great ceremony. The Grandfather will pour sweet wine over it three times while saying:

**Joy! Joy! Joy! May God bring us joy!  
And if, in the year to come, we are not more, let us not be less!**

Then he and the youngest child carry the log three times around the Christmas table before taking it to the fireplace. Alas, fireplaces are less common than they once were, but if you have no fireplace, a decorated log can be used as a centerpiece, as is done in Italy where the log is known as a “ceppo.”

While the Yule log burns, a candle is put in the window. This is an old Irish custom stemming from the Protestant persecutions: the candle signaled to priests that the home was a safe place for Mass to be offered, but when the English asked questions, they were told that it was a symbolic invitation to Joseph and Mary.

The Christ candle—a large white candle decorated with holly and such—is lit for Christmas Eve Supper, replacing the Advent wreath. It is re-lit each night until the Epiphany to represent Christ’s Light and in order to help guide the Magi to the manger. The greenery of the Advent wreath itself is now decorated and hung on the front door, remaining there throughout the Christmas season.

Christmas *Eve* (before the Vigil Mass) is a day of fasting and abstinence. The 1982 Code of Canon Law eliminated this fast altogether, but traditional Catholics still keep the fast, eating seafood (the Italians eat fish—often seven of them...!), noodles, other forms of pasta, etc. for the Christmas Eve Supper.

In any case, on both Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day, special dinners are served. The table should be beautiful, with greenery and candles, especially the Christ Candle.

Mass is obligatory on Christmas, and this can be fulfilled by going to any one of three Masses:

- The Mass at Midnight, called the “Angels’ Mass
- The Mass on Christmas morning, called the “Shepherds’ Mass”
- The Mass on Christmas day, called the “Mass of the Divine Word” or “Kings’ Mass”

The Midnight Mass, though, is the one most Catholics clamor to attend.

Christmas truly is becoming seen as a secular day of merry-making and greed for material things; the **holy meaning of this wondrous day needs to be restored**. Limiting the number of gifts, limiting the prices of gifts, insisting only on homemade gifts, spreading the gift-giving out over St. Nicholas’s day, Christmas, and Twelfth night, are some ways to defeat the intense commercialism.

Christmas Day is spent with family, feasting, enjoying one another’s company, singing songs, playing games, telling stories. Mostly, it is a day to continue customs **and** making new ones.

\*(excerpted from [fisheaters.com/customschristmas2.html](http://fisheaters.com/customschristmas2.html))

**THE COLORS OF CHRISTMAS**

**\*\*Stores and homes display colors of Red and Green** which can be seen all throughout the stores and homes during the Christmas Season, however, the church chooses WHITE for the Feast of Christmas. WHITE is the color of purity and new life. White seems appropriate for a new born Infant, announced by the Angels and wrapped in pure white swaddling clothes of a Newborn Baby. Gold is recognized for the solemn feast of the epiphany when we see the royalty of the nations honoring this Child not just as Savior of Israel, but of the Entire World! **\*\***(excerpted from [www.nwicatholic.com](http://www.nwicatholic.com))