

# January 1, 2024 Sharing the Good News

**“Come and see.” John 1:46**

**Just wait! The Bible verse at the top of this newsletter brought back to me the words that our Bishop spoke when he visited us in November. “Just wait!” He said. And after months, even years of our congregation's numbers holding steady, we have been blessed with visitors twice in the last the last two months. With that in mind, it might be worth remembering what we talked about so long ago. You have been great at greeting our guests and making them feel welcome. We also talked about making positive comments about our church, not negative comments about other churches. When we have visitors, we need to avoid controversial topics, such as politics, abortion, sexuality. Obviously, these are topics that divide instead of unite.**

## **More Thoughts from the Vicar**

Recently as I was contemplating either a sermon or an article for this newsletter, I came upon this interesting article on the popular carol “The Twelve Days of Christmas”. By the way, today (January 1) is the eighth day, so it might be too early to take down your decorations.

The song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is an English Christmas carol. From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of the Church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

The "True Love" one hears in the song is not a smitten boy or girlfriend but Jesus Christ, because truly Love was born on Christmas Day. The partridge in the pear tree also represents Him because that bird is willing to sacrifice its life if necessary to protect its young by feigning injury to draw away predators.

According to Ann Ball in her book, **HANDBOOK OF CATHOLIC SACRAMENTALS:**

The two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments

The three French hens stood for faith, hope, and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The five golden rings rerepresented the first five books of the Old Testament, which describe man's fall into sin and the great love of God in sending a Savior.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit----Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit-----Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience [Forbearance], Goodness [Kindness], Mildness, Fidelity, Modesty, Continency [Chastity].

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful Apostles.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in The Apostles' Creed.

While all of this is very interesting, it is a controversial topic as I found when I came upon the following article. After reading it, I was glad that I had not proceeded with the sermon.

It all stems from an article published by Fr. Hal Stockert back in 1995 on the website of the Catholic Information Network, and Father Stockert, after being asked to cite his sources, admitted that he didn't have any. That's not to say that Father Stockert was trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes; he most likely made his error in good faith,

Another example of how you can't believe everything you read on the internet!

**We have one birthday** at St. Mary's in January. Braden's birthday is **January 7.**

### **Readers and coffee hours for January**

January 6 (Epiphany) 4 pm Sylvia (**no coffee hour**)

January 7 Epiphany I 10:30 McCoys

January 14 Epiphany II Elisabeth

January 21 Epiphany III Braden

January 28 Epiphany IV Kemps

### **Parish Prayer List**

**For those fighting cancer:** Cindy, Karen, Carol, Malia, Richard, Bill G., Barb, Kevin, Mark Heys, Fr. Michael, Judy, Bishop Wencelas

**For those in need of uplifting prayer:** Diane, Kathy, Dan, Sylvia, the Todd family, Laurie, Alex, Shannon, Susan, Jon, Luke, Jerry, Donna, Jonas, Tim, Carolyn, Gary, Stuart, Madeleine, Brenda, Teri, Thomas, Teegan, Jordan, Brandi, Kathy, Judy, Daniel, Larry, William, Kris, Dick, Donna

**For those in long term care:** Gabriel, Grace, Danielle, the residents at Holly Brook, Reflections and South Park

**For the Church's ministry in Nepal:** Purna, Mahendra, Dipendra, Reshma, Prakash, their families and Churches; the Transformation Spiritual Church

**For the growth of St. Mary's Anglican Mission**

**For those affected by the war in the Middle East**