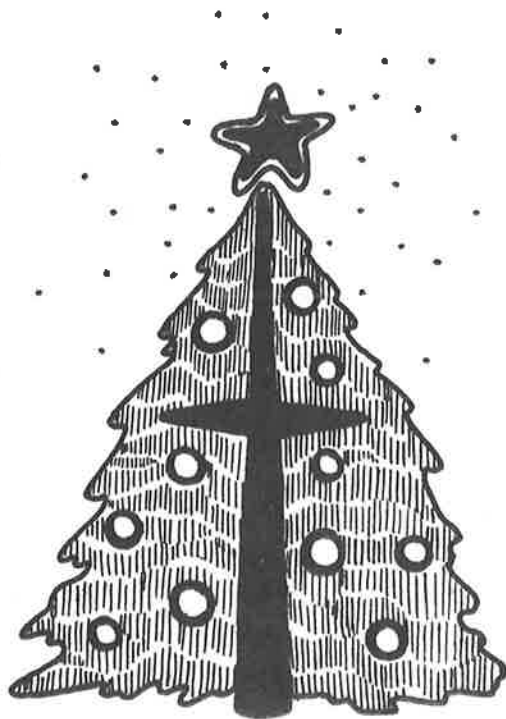


by doing all the work that you're expected to do. Mostly, you can guard your thinking so that nothing bad sneaks in. You can stay wide awake so you'll hear God's angels speaking in your thoughts. God will always tell you where to go or what to do to be happy.

You can be a wise man (or a wise woman). Those wise men had lots of things. But they weren't too impressed with their things, or too busy being wise, or feeling too important to drop everything to go on that journey. You can take a spiritual journey every day to find the Christ child. Reading the Bible will help you know about Jesus and his teachings and his healing works. God might not use a star, but he will show you the way on your spiritual journey. You will know how to be safe and happy and good.

In your own Christmas pageant, you could be just one character every day, or you could play all the character parts. Whatever you decide to do, you'll have fun being in this Christmas pageant.

— adapted from *Christian Science Monitor*  
December 18, 2001



Christmas

## THE HISTORY OF "the 12 days of Christmas"

*Have you ever wondered what in the world leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas? If so, read on.*

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 their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

The **partridge in a pear tree** was Jesus Christ.

**Two turtle doves** were the Old and New Testaments.

**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** recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

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

**Seven swans a-swimming** represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit—prophesy, serving, teaching, faith, stewardship, leadership, and healing. (*1 Corinthians 12*)

The **eight maids a-milking** were the eight beatitudes. (*Matthew 5*)

**Nine ladies dancing** were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (*Galatians 5:9*)

The **ten lords a-leaping** were the ten commandments.

The **eleven pipers piping** stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The **twelve drummers drumming** symbolized the twelve points of belief in the creed.