

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

This year our Christmas issue is about the history of the “Twelve Days of Christmas,” a song used in European traditions as early as the 16th century. At one time the carol was thought to be a secret method of teaching Catholic doctrine during the English Reformation when Catholics in England were prohibited from any private or public practice of their faith. Here’s the tradition, along with an all-in-fun memory aid on the 12 Powers:

- My true love—God the Father [Father/Mother God]
- A partridge in a pear tree—Jesus as the partridge, the cross as the pear tree [Faith]
- Two turtle doves—the two testaments (Old and New) [Love—turtle doves are known for this]
- Three French hens—3 gifts of the wise men, 3 Christian virtues (faith, hope, and charity), or 3 persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) [Strength—a three-legged stool is strong]
- Four calling birds—4 gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) [Wisdom—found in the gospels]
- Five golden rings—5 books of Moses [Power—the slowest verse requires the greatest power, and like the ring, power in us is never-ending]
- Six geese a-laying—6 days of creation [Imagination—geese lay eggs in unending supply, just as ideas continually come to us]
- Seven swans a-swimming—7 gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:6-8) [Understanding—like the 7 gifts, spiritual understanding is an additional gift of Spirit. Through it, we discern right action.]
- Eight maids a-milking—8 beatitudes (Matt. 5-7) [Will—if you’re going to milk a cow, you have to be intentional about it ☺]
- Nine ladies dancing—9 fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) (Order—there will have to be some agreement between the ladies about order, or chaos will rule)
- Ten lords a-leaping—10 commandments [Enthusiasm—what could be more enthusiastic than ten lords leaping about?]
- Eleven pipers piping—11 apostles (excluding Judas who did fail) [Elimination—Judas was eliminated]
- Twelve drummers drumming—12 articles of Apostles' Creed [Life—drumming is like the heartbeat of life]

We hope you find this a helpful and fun way to remember the powers. Merry Christmas!

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Barbara O’Hearne  
Church Management Consultant  
Email: [ohearnekc@aol.com](mailto:ohearnekc@aol.com)

Lisa Wittman  
VP of Communications  
Email: [dom@unity.org](mailto:dom@unity.org)