

I have come to the point in my life in which Christmas- the cultural meaning with Santa and shopping, the Christian meaning with the advent wreath and nativity, the carols and music, the celebration, the gifts, the decorations, the pageants, the family, the friends, the food, the fellowship, the goodwill- is all about Spirit. Whether we would use these words or not, Christmas is about the Spirit of Christ alive in the world- hope, peace, joy, love, and light present in us, with us, around us.

Can any of us dispute that this Spirit feels good, sounds good, and that the Spirit works?

Knowing this, believing this, having experienced this, how many of us then only want the Spirit of Christmas during this season or on this day? None of us.

Think about it. Christmas has the power to do things no one believes possible. During some of the worst wars in history, even enemies on the battlefield receive orders to cease fire in the Spirit of Christmas. If our military forces can find it in their hearts to honor the Spirit of Christmas on Christmas, why wouldn't we give every effort we can to then allow the Spirit of Christmas to fill our lives every day of the year?

Think about it. The Spirit of Christmas cannot be found in a box wrapped neatly and placed under a tree any more than our understanding of God can be found in a box. The Spirit of Christmas is boundless, borderless, timeless.

Now, let us think about this. Jesus was not born only for that specific time and place in Bethlehem. Jesus' birth was the beginning of a new covenant and new Spirit experienced throughout life. Jesus' birth was not meant to only be celebrated in one season or on one day, but each and every day. Why? Because the birth of Jesus means hope amid our fears. Fear is an illusion, but God's hope is a hope that delivers on its promises. Because the birth of Jesus means peace, shalom, well-being. God's peace is a peace that surpasses understanding and provides contentment. Because the birth of Jesus means joy. A joy that transcends circumstances and fills us with good tidings. Because the birth of Jesus means God's gift of love to us. A love that is unconditional and boundless, borderless, and timeless. Because the birth of Jesus means light, the light of the world, in which darkness will never be able to overcome.

Now, let's face it, we need the Spirit of Christmas to show up in our lives more often than once a year, don't we? We need the Spirit of Christmas every day, with every breath we take.

The good news for us is that Christ, and Christmas, is such that we can take it with us wherever, whatever, whenever, however. We might only sing the song, “The Twelve Days of

Christmas”, this time of year, but the true meaning behind the song is not about French Hens, Lords a Leaping, and Maids A-Milking. It is not even about Five Golden Rings.

The Twelve Days of Christmas are about the Spirit of Christ alive and present as our foundation to daily living.

The First Day of Christmas

A Partridge in a Pear Tree - This represents Jesus Christ, the son of God and savior to the Christian world.

The Second Day of Christmas

Two Turtle Doves - The doves represent the Old and New Testaments, the two books that comprise the Holy Bible.

The Third Day of Christmas

Three French Hens - The theological Virtues are Faith, Hope, and Charity, and are symbolized by this particular sign.

The Fourth Day of Christmas

Four Calling Birds - This symbol represents two similar ideas: the four Gospels and their writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Fifth Day of Christmas

Five Golden Rings - Leaning towards literacy, this stands for the first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Sixth Day of Christmas

Six Geese A-Laying - In Genesis, the creation story is told in which God takes six days to create the world; this symbol recognizes those words.

The Seventh Day of Christmas

Seven Swans-a-Swimming - The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord

The Eighth Day of Christmas

Eight Maids A-Milking - The maids represent the eight Beatitudes, which can be found in the passage of the Bible that talks about the Sermon on the Mount. Condensed, they are: Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are they who mourn, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the clean of heart, blessed are the peacemakers, and blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake.

The Ninth Day of Christmas

Nine Ladies Dancing - This symbol represents the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The Tenth Day of Christmas

Ten Lords A-Leaping - Reflects the Ten Commandments, brought down by Moses and passed down as Catholic law. (No need to reprint them here)

The Eleventh Day of Christmas

Eleven Pipers Piping - The eleven faithful apostles are remembered in this particular symbol: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Jude, and Simon (though there were twelve, Judas is excluded due to his betrayal of Christ)

The Twelfth Day of Christmas

Twelve Drummers Drumming - The final verse refers to the the doctrine of the Apostle's Creed and the twelve points included therein (belief in God the Father almighty, belief in Jesus Christ his only Son - our Lord, that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was crucified, died and was buried, then he descended into hell, that he rose again the third day, that he ascended into heaven, that he is seated at the right hand of the Father, that he is to come to judge the living and the dead, belief in the Holy Ghost, belief in the holy catholic Church and the communion of saints, belief in the remission of sins, and belief in the resurrection of the flesh and life eternal.)

The Spirit of Christmas is boundless, borderless, and timeless, just like God's love given to us through the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the Way, Truth, and Life, the Resurrection, and the Vine. Apart from Christ we are nothing. Apart from the Spirit of Christmas, this day and this season are nothing.

Glory be to God for the Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Light of Christ, which fills us with the Spirit of Christmas all year long.