

Today is Also Christmas

If your family is a trifle old-fashioned; and if you didn't decorate your Christmas tree until shortly before Christmas itself, chances are it will not be taken down until tomorrow. Why? Because today is Little Christmas. That's the way we used to do it in the far-off days before merchants began to grind out carols, and deck the merchandise marks with ivy the day after Thanksgiving.-- the better to stimulate the mad rush of Christmas shoppers; and, incidentally, to separate you from every dime you laid aside throughout the year!

In our era, by Christmas morning we are so weary of lighted trees, carols, and tinsel, and jingles, and phony giving of gifts, that we want to forget the whole holiday with its ivy, and holly, and mistletoe. By this time, even the harmless greeting, "Merry Christmas to you!" is so woefully trite, it gives you pains all over!

There was a time, though, when we observed Christmas properly -- after four weeks of advent. We prayed, and fasted, and meditated quietly on the wonderful event that was to come. And we moved gracefully into Christmas with a great sense of awe and hushed expectancy, and spiritual joy, at the miracle of the birth of Our Lord. Not being in any great hurry to lose this atmosphere by plunging into the humdrum of our prosaic existence, we took 12 days to rejoice. That was the custom of the entire Western world -- in the old days before January Clearance sales.

Today -- the 12th day -- is the Feast of the Epiphany -- a major feast in the Church. Even as late as the time of Elizabeth I, of England, Shakespeare was ordered by Her Majesty to carry out the old custom of celebrating this feast by entertaining the court that evening. For lack of a better name, he simply called his farcial work, Twelfth Night.

Epiphany is a Greek word, meaning "to show to" -- and recalls the manifestation of Our Lord to the Gentiles, in the persons of the three kingly Wise Men who say and followed the star, and arrived at Bethlehem some days after His birth, and after His manifestation to the Jewish shepherds.

You will recall that the Wise Men brought gifts to Him -- probably the origin of our present custom of giving gifts. Even today, some portions of the Oriental Church confine their Christmas celebrations to this particular day.

If you used your missal at Mass, this morning, you caught the theme of the Epiphany psalm -- peace and justice:

"In His days shall peace and justice spring up, and abundance of peace . . . and all kings of the earth shall adore him; all nations shall serve Him . . . all nations shall magnify him."

This is the year devoted to Mary, the Mother of the Child. This is the Marian Year. Let peace and justice be the theme of your prayers to her for the weeks to come!
Prayers requested

Requested: father of Don Stuhldreher of Cavanna; brother of Prof. John Seemall of the Phy-Med. Dept.; father of Prof. Salo Feiro; Gus Lewis, 114; Edwin J. Baker, 125; W. S. A. Janofsky, 137; father of Mike Shannon, 139; father of John R. Brown of Lyons 112; Jerry Thiermicht, 124; Mrs. Colleen Quinlan; father of Ed Roubert; of Madin.

11: sister of John and Robert Bunsbach; father of Father Leif, CSC; brother of Fr. P. M., CSC; sister of Bernard Gestin, 125; friend of Fred Cordillo of Dillon.