

# RELIGIOUS BULLETIN

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Notre Dame, Ind.

## FIRST FRIDAY

The number of those who turned out today for First Friday Communion of Reparation was most gratifying. Let's hope we can have the same turn-out tomorrow when we pray for peace and victory. And every day, for that matter.

## THE SEASON

With the beginning of Advent, thoughts start turning to Christmas and Christmas customs--gift-giving, cribs, wreathes, trees, holly, and carols. If you time your arrival home just right you may not get too involved in the work that's required to put everything together. But once everything's in place you can give an explanation of it all with the help of these quotes from Fr. Cleary, OSB:

### gift-giving

The desire to give oneself and one's possession to the person loved is a natural consequence of love. On Christmas almighty God gave us His most precious possession—the very image of His goodness—His own Son. He asks for our love in return. Following the example of their God, Christians, too, have exchanged gifts with their loved ones, and in true charity have given generously to their poorer brothers during the Christmas season. For when our poverty-stricken race was destitute of love, having been stripped by the devil, did not God give us all good things in His beloved Son?

### the crib

The practice of portraying with statues the entire scene of the first Christmas was introduced by St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis had a very tender devotion to the divine Infant and he desired a realistic reenactment of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. He erected for his townspeople a crib with statues, straw and live animals, so that on the feast all might gather at a "new Bethlehem" and celebrate the remembrance of the first holy night. Soon miniature replicas of St. Francis' "new Bethlehem" enhanced the homes of humble folk all over the world.

### wreathes

The practice of placing wreathed candles in the windows during the holiday season is a remnant of the days of English persecution of religion in Ireland. The Irish people, stalwart in their loyalty to the ancient faith, practiced their religion in secret. Priests were hunted out as traitors and could minister to the faithful gathered together in their homes only at night. Around Christmas time lighted candles would be placed in the windows as a sign to the priests that they would be welcome in that home. To the English officials, demanding to know the meaning of these lighted candles, the people replied that it was an Irish tradition that every Christmas eve our Lord again tests the charity of the world. The lighted

candles were a sign to Mary and Joseph that they would find a welcome reception in the Irish home. The reply was true, although the questioners did not realize its full significance. Christ had indeed tried the charity of the Irish people by persecution and, in welcoming His priests, the people welcomed the divine Savior who would come into their midst at Mass. The Irish immigrants brought this, their symbol of Christmas, to the land to which they migrated.

### the Christmas tree

Perhaps the most popular of our seasonal decorations is the Christmas tree, which far from being a pagan ornament, as so many people think, is as Christian as the crib itself. The Christmas tree has its origin in the medieval German mystery plays.

### holly

Of the various plants that are used in Christmas decorations the most familiar is the holly, which is hung at doors and windows and used in making Christmas wreaths. Its green leaves and red berries have become the universal symbol of this season, adorning greeting cards, gift boxes, tags and labels, and wrapping paper. To the early Christians of northern Europe this plant was a symbol of the burning thorn bush of Moses (which itself was symbolic of Mary whose virginity was preserved even with motherhood) and the flaming love for God filled Mary's heart. Later the holly berries came to represent drops of Christ's blood, the prickly leaves being a reminder that the divine Child was born to wear a crown of thorns.

### carols

St. Augustine remarks: "Singing is characteristic of a lover." Song is a natural expression of joy. In her great joy over the birth of the Savior, the Christian soul spontaneously breaks into song. The lover celebrates in song the object of his love.



CHRISTMAS COULD BE EMBARRASSING. Most parents have heard or will hear of the Novena for Parents conducted here each year before the holidays. They tell me they look for that card indicating that you've thought enough of them and the sacrifices they're making to offer nine days of Mass and Holy Communion in Thanksgiving for the parents God has given you. The Novena cards will be available next week. But, the Novena itself will begin next Tuesday. The card will tell your parents that you've been grateful for what they have done for you, and are trying to live a good life. Obviously, this is a consolation to every parent. Parents know that a son who prays has a right sense of values. And it makes them glad to have brought a child into the world.

YOU CAN DERIVE A KEEN SENSE OF enjoyment from knowing that you have made a real effort--and the effort was much appreciated.

EVEN THAT MOTHER'S SON who might be termed a hardened sinner will be glad this Christmas, if he wakes up to the fact that alone he is lost--but with the Saviour he has every hope of victory.

YOUR PRAISE AND LOVE OF God during this Novena will rejoice the Holy Family. There will be new souls entering Heaven during the days of this Novena. They will hear the

story of the First Christmas from the Holy Family itself. They cannot remain untouched by all the praise and love that will be given the Son of God, His mother, and St. Joseph during these days. And how important this will be, if one of those who enter Heaven during the next week is a friend or relative of yours.

FOR MOST OF YOU, Christmas will be marked by material gifts. By your prayers during this Novena, you may learn better how to view your material blessings. You may be reminded that the Saviour loved the poor and inspires us to love them and share our temporal goods with them.

FINALLY, during the Novena, you may come to appreciate better that there are two groups who will definitely be unhappy on Christmas Day. The Souls in Hell and the men living in Mortal Sin. The soul in Hell will never experience joy again for even so much as a second. Those in mortal sin have a chance for happiness, if they can bring themselves to return to God by confession and sincere contrition.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, for many, the hardest part of making the Novena will be getting out of bed in the morning. The effort is guaranteed to be worth it. Make it!

*Glenn Boorman, ecc.*  
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