

What is Christmas really about?

By KAREN PAYNE

What is Christmas? It is the glorified holiday that children look forward to every year. Their favorite holiday, of course. How many other days out of the year do they get bombarded with gifts? Christmas is a definite learning experience for kids. They learn what it means to be greedy.

We celebrate Christmas in tribute to the birth of Jesus Christ. Apparently, no one knows the exact date of His birthdate, but most Christians observe December 25 as Christmas Day.

During the season we celebrate by decorating our homes and places of business with holly, mistletoe and the famous Christmas tree.

The word Christmas comes from "Christes messas", an early English phrase that means "mass of Christ".

The story of Christmas is derived from the gospels of Saint Luke and Saint Matthew in the New Testament.

According to Luke, an angel appeared and told shepherds near the town

of Bethlehem of the miraculous birth of Christ.

Matthew told how the three wise men, or "Magi" were lead to this savior by a bright star.

KNOWN CELEBRATIONS

The first known celebration of Christmas occurred in 336 A.D. This is according to an early Roman calendar. It was celebrated on December 25.

In the late 300's Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire. By 1100 Christmas became the most important religious festival in Europe.

During this time Saint Nicholas became a symbol of gift-giving in many European countries.

In 1500 Protestantism was born. During this time many Christians began to feel that Christmas included non-religious customs.

In the 1600's Christmas was outlawed in England and in parts of the English Colonies in America because of these feelings.

Despite the outlawing of it, people continued to exchange gifts regard-

less. In the 1800's two more customs evolved and became popular: decorating Christmas trees and sending greeting cards to friends and relatives.

In Spain people dance in the streets after midnight.

"Silent Night" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" were composed during this time.

In countries including the United States Santa Claus replaced Saint Nicholas as the symbol of gift giving.

The Christmas tradition became important to different businesses for economic reasons.

SELL TREES

Today companies manufacture Christmas decorations and sell trees for the occasion. Many places hire extra help for the Christmas rush.

People celebrate Christmas all over the world.

In Spain, for example, people dance in the streets after Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Most Spanish homes display a Nativity scene

called a Nacimiento. On January 5 the children of Spain put their shoes near a window or on a balcony. The following day is Epiphany which is the last day of their Christ-

mas season. This day celebrates the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus.

According to the Spanish tradition, the wise men visit each home and distribute gifts to all the children in their shoes.

In Poland the people attend "Pasterka". This means the "Shepherd's Mass". They then follow the Christmas tradition by breaking an "oplakek" which is a thin layer of wafer made of wheat flour and water.

Nativity scenes are stamped on the oplakek. The head of the family holds the wafer and each person then eats a small piece of it. The Christmas dinner consists of fish, sauerkraut, potato pancakes and beet soup.

So every different cul-

ture has its own way of celebrating Christmas, with one thing in common, Christ's birthday.

HUMBLE

In some cultures it is a very humble celebration. In the United States and Canada, however, it is quite the opposite.

Around Christmas time every year, people basically shop in department stores while toy manufacturers work all day and reap in the anticipated millions.

This generation of children has grown up receiving toys by the truckload for Christmas. How many of these kids understand why they are being loaded with all of these wonderful gifts?

When you mention Christmas to a child today the first vision that may pop into his head will be a new Barbie doll or Darth Vader toy. It might not be that holy wonder in Bethlehem so many centuries ago.

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Kin tree sales begin December 2

"Have we got a tree for you!"

That's what members of Georgetown's Kinsmen Club are telling people as they prepare for the club's annual Christmas tree sale beginning Dec. 2.

The tree sale is never short of a wide selection of quality trees—442 of them will sprout overnight on the A and P Parking Lot at the corner of Sinclair Avenue and Guelph Street.

Twelve Scotch Pine will be over eight feet tall for churches and homes with high ceilings. They'll sell for \$15 while the smaller Scotch

Pines will retail for \$14.

Balsams will sell for \$16. Trees will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

The annual sale, which raises money for Kinsmen-sponsored charities and community projects, has been a victim in the past of overnight tree thefts.

The club advises that the people most hurt by the loss of trees are community residents who enjoy a number of Kinsmen-sponsored projects, like parkettes and the ice cleaner at Gordon Alcott Arena.

The sale will continue until all trees are sold.

Annual toy drive

The Kinetts Club of Georgetown's annual Christmas Toy Drive is underway once again, with many local groups already collecting new or nearly new toys for needy area children.

The Toy Drive, held in conjunction with The Good Neighbour Service has been a Kinetts pro-

ject for the past eighteen years and each year the Kinetts are amazed at the generosity of local citizens.

Toys can be dropped off anytime at the home of Kinetts Joanne Sillea, 25 Heather Ct., (877-0722) or at the office of Arthur F. Johnson Real Estate on Guelph St., (877-5165).

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