

Candles or tapers have been a symbol of Christ from the very beginning of Christianity.

At Christmas time a large candle was lit in homes on Christmas Eve symbolizing Christ, the "Light of the World." It was left to burn the whole night to mark the Nativity.

Candles symbol of Jesus

The custom still persists in some countries such as France, Ireland, Denmark and England. Canadian families light candles decorated with

pine, or fir-branches during Christmas dinner but the meaning has been obscured by the passage of time.

Candles are enjoying a come-back again. Fire departments which must quench flames started by careless people are imploring residents to never leave lighted candles unattended.

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KNIGHTS DONATE: The Knights of Columbus held their "Keep Christ in Christmas" poster project at St. Joseph school this year. Each child from kindergarten to grade 3 were given a poster of the manger scene to colour, while the grade 4's to grade 8's were given the option of drawing their own manger scene or writing a Christmas essay. For every poster or essay collected, the Knights of Columbus donated \$1 to the charity of St. Joseph's choice. This year they chose to donate to Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a disease that St. Joseph student Rebecca Van Fraassen suffers from. Rebecca is seen here accepting a cheque from Knights of Columbus representative Jay Raats. Behind them is, Vanessa Torres in grade 2, Rebecca's sister Rachel Van Fraassen in grade 8 and Alessio Luna in grade 2. These students all participated in the poster project. - *Justina Pembleton photo.*

Hanging stockings old custom

Hanging up a stocking at Christmas has been a custom \, which goes back to the time when almost every home had a fireplace.

"The stockings were hung by the chimney with care" in "the hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there," says the old poem by Clement Moore.

In Canada, the traditional Christmas stocking actually dates back to the end of the 19th century. The first to mention Christmas stockings being hung from a chimney was the illustrator, Tomas Nast, through his drawings.

The custom is still strong. There's a story about a man, 45, married with a wife and family who still insisted his mother hang his stocking up over the fireplace in the house

where he grew up. Others have different traditions.

In Quebec and Acadia, children traditionally put their shoes close to the fireplace so that the Infant Jesus, and later "Pere Noel" (Father Christmas) could put gifts there on Christmas Eve.

In some Quebec families, children hung their stocking at the end of their bed rather than hanging them close to the fireplace or putting out their shoes. This custom ended during the 1930s when Christmas trees started to be set up in houses with gifts placed underneath.

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