

2nd Sunday after the Nativity



The song ‘**The Twelve Days of Christmas**’, was written in sixteenth-century.

Actually it was written by a couple of crafty Jesuits who were playing a dangerous game. In sixteenth—century England anything Catholic was outlawed. If discovered it was punishable by imprisonment or death. As a result, the Catholic faith was forced underground. Still, there was a desperate need to encourage the faith and pass the faith on to the next generation.

These Jesuits came up with a way to teach an outline of the faith — but in code. The code is our song. Here is the code decoded:

The Twelve Days of Christmas are the days from Christmas Day to the Epiphany.

‘**My true love gave to me**’ is God speaking to the anonymous Catholic.

The ‘twelve drummers drumming’ are not, as you might expect, the twelve apostles, but rather the twelve beliefs (or articles) outlined in the Apostles’ Creed.

The **‘eleven pipers piping’** are the eleven apostles — Judas having left — who pipe the faith in an unbroken tradition.

The **‘ten lords a-leaping’** are the Ten Commandments.

The **‘nine ladies dancing’** are the nine choirs of angels.

The **‘eight maids a-milking’** are the eight beatitudes.

The **‘seven swans a—swimming’** are the seven sacraments.

The **‘six geese a-laying’** are the six precepts of the church.

The **‘five golden rings’** are the first five books of the Bible, called the Torah.

The **‘four calling birds’** are the four gospels that sing the good news.

The **‘three French hens’** are the three gifts of the Magi.

The **‘two turtle doves’** are the Old and New Testaments.

And finally **‘the partridge in a pear tree’** is the resplendent Christ reigning from the cross.

For the uninitiated sixteenth-century English Protestant, the song was a simple holiday pleantry. But for people who were playing hide-and-seek with their faith, it was a coded outline from which they could unfold the truths of faith, a kind of chapter headings of a catechism that teachers could secretly use to hang their teachings on.

People have always used imaginative ways to pass on the faith and to restate the basic gospel message, especially the message of Christmas.

I am sure we all received the tradition of our faith in different ways. Some were probably hidden like the lyrics of the song. Perhaps they were hidden in the way a teacher taught us. Perhaps it was the way our parents or grandparents guided us in the faith by sharing their own life of faith.

We are called to believe first and look at life with faith and then act on what we see.

As we celebrate a New Year and as we continue to celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, may we look back and think about the many ways we received our faith and act on that gift of faith.

We're still celebrating the coming into this world of Jesus. He is the Word of God, the true light that enlightens everyone, the Word made flesh who lived among us.

Jesus came down to earth to raise us up to share his glory in the kingdom of heaven. Let us ask him to lift us up from everything that harms us in this world and to renew us in holiness and glory.

Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2. 8-12

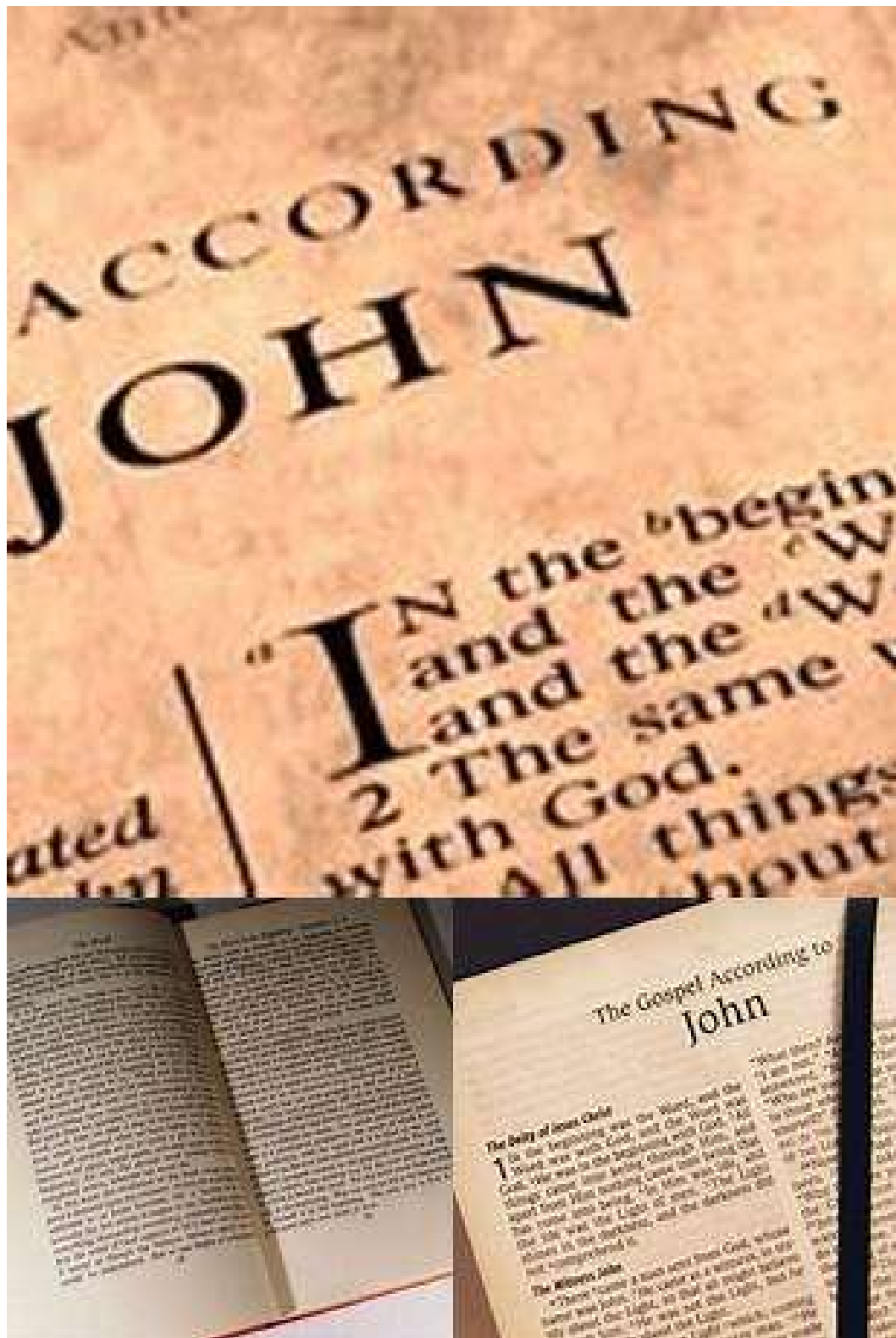
God's Wisdom is sent by the creator to dwell on earth.

Ephesians 1:3-6. 15-18

From the beginning of creation God called us to live through love in God's presence, and to inherit the rich glories of the saints.

John 1:1-18

John reveals the mystery of the incarnation, the presence of Jesus Christ, the Word of God from the beginning of creation, the true light that enlightens everyone, and the Word made flesh who dwelt among us.



Reflection

The Prologue (Chapter One, verses 1 - 18 of the Gospel of St. John is a mystical reflection on the Divinity and Incarnation of Jesus Christ, "the Word made Flesh".

It is one of the most significant theological passages in the whole of the Bible. This beautiful passage is often found in anthologies of world literature, for it is truly poetic as well as profound in nature. The Prologue begins and ends in eternity, which effectively emphasises the Word entering time and history through the Incarnation.

In the Prologue, John identifies Jesus as the *logos* - λόγος, the Word or reason, the philosophical concept of God's unifying principle for all creation. The opening line parallels the opening line of Genesis 1:1, "in the beginning;" the Word was with God from the beginning. The Prologue clearly asserts the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Themes introduced in the Prologue such as light, life, darkness, witness, faith, glory, and truth are more fully developed throughout the Gospel of John.

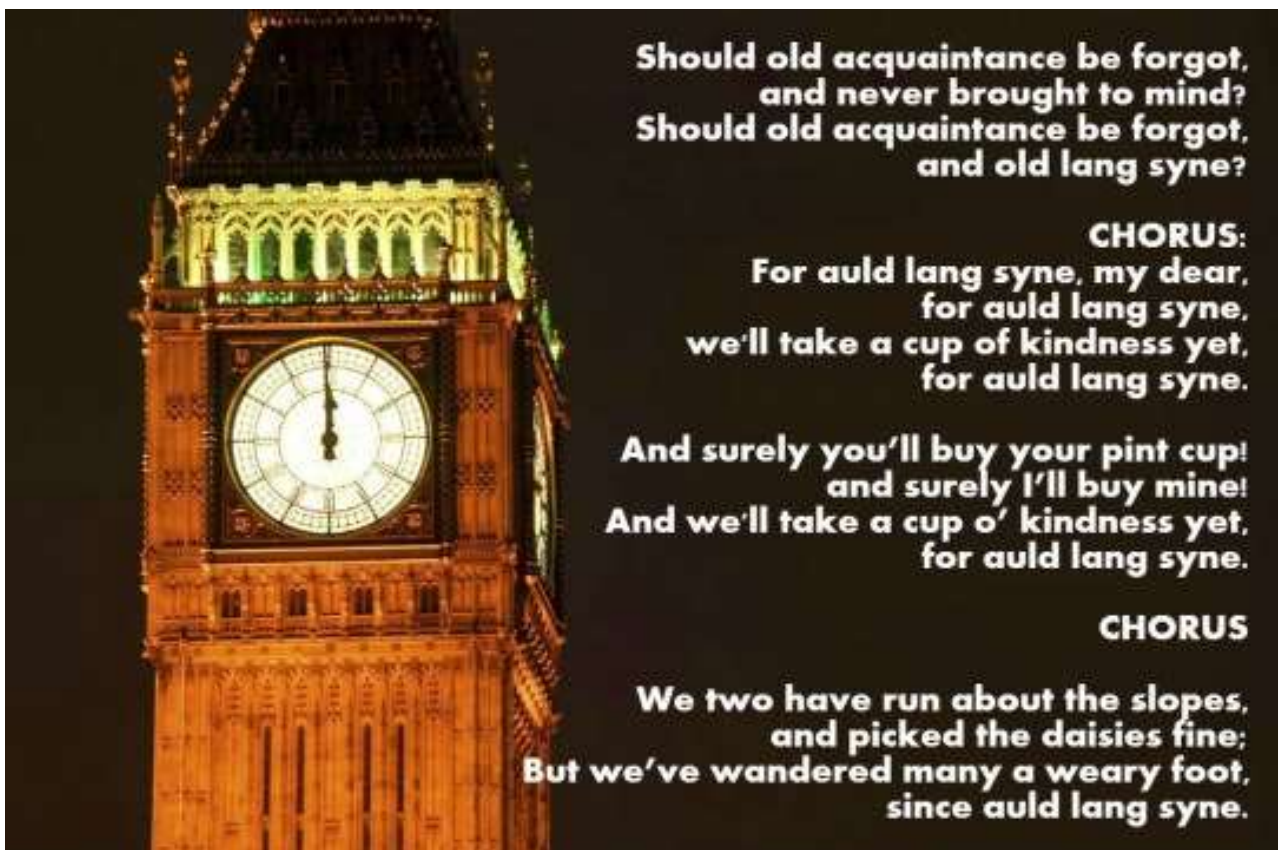
John uses the terms *light* and *darkness* to express the eternal struggle between good and evil: "the darkness did not overcome it."



NEW YEAR

The celebration of the New Year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. The Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (the first visible crescent) after the 'Vernal Equinox' (first day of spring). The Romans continued to observe the New Year in late March, but their calendar was tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon was out of sync with the sun. In order to set the calendar right again, Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what became known as the Julian calendar. It established January 1 as the New Year. In some New Year's Eve customs, the image of Father Time is used as the personification of the previous year (or "the Old Year"), who "hands over" the duties of time to the Baby New Year.

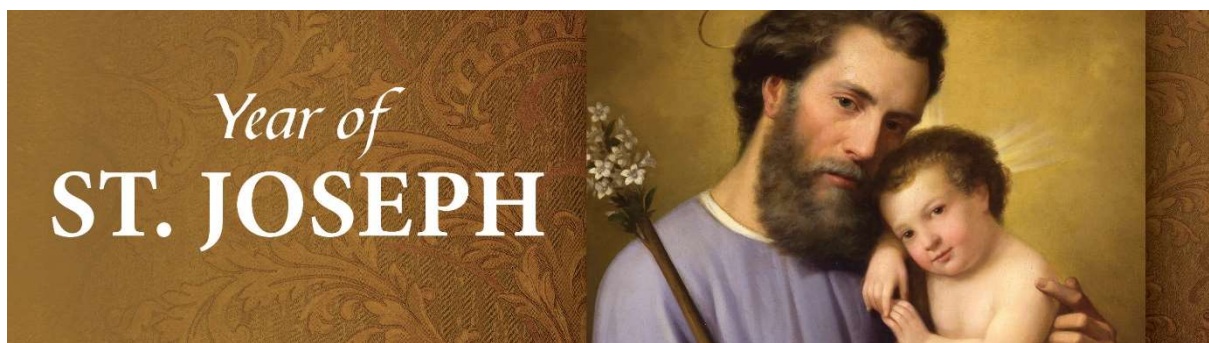
The poet Robert Burns translated the old Scottish dialect "Auld Lang Syne" to mean 'Old Long Ago' in his poem about love and friendship in times past.





WORLD DAY OF PEACE, JANUARY 1

The World Day of Peace of the Catholic Church is a day dedicated to peace, held on 1 January. It was introduced in 1967 by Paul VI, inspired by the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII and with reference to his own encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. The day was first observed on 1 January 1968. The theme for Pope Francis' World Day of Peace message is: **“Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace.”** In his Message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis urges us to practice active nonviolence and work to prevent conflict by addressing its causes, building relationships, and facilitating healing and restoration.



In an Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde* (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis marked the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pope Pius IX’s declaration of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To celebrate the anniversary, Pope Francis proclaimed a **“Year of St Joseph,”** beginning on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2020 and extending to the same feast in 2021.