

Twelve days of Christmas takes on new meaning

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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Another Perspective

By Lori Pankonin

I've never given much thought to the lyrics in the "Twelve Days of Christmas" song. Twelve drummers drumming, 11 pipers piping, 10 Lords a leaping.

Does it have to make sense? I mean, look at nursery rhymes. Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater put his wife in a pumpkin shell in order to keep her. Why was Little Jack Horner a good boy for sticking his thumb into a pie and pulling out a plum?

Dr. Seuss' ever popular books had a fun twist and were good for reading repetition. But did they have to make sense? Green Eggs and Ham for instance. I do not like them in a box. I do not like them with a fox. I do not like them in a house. I do not like them with a mouse. Hmm?

Never had I given any thought to the Christmas song having a religious connection. That is until I read a suggestion recently that it was originally a catechism song written to help Catholics learn their faith at a time when practicing Catholicism was criminalized in England.

Interestingly enough, the message was the very sermon topic at the Imperial Methodist Church on Sunday and it very definitely relates to teachings of the Bible.

Twelve drummers drumming, 11 Lords a leaping, nine ladies dancing, eight maids a milking, seven swans a swimming, six geese a laying, FIVE GOLDEN RINGS. Four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree.

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So here's the interpretation.

Jesus represents the partridge in a pear tree.

The Old and New testaments are the two turtle doves with the three French hens signifying the three wise men bringing gifts.

Four calling birds—the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Five golden rings—the Torah or first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

Six geese a laying—the six days of creation prior to resting. On the first day, there was light separating day and night. On the second day, the waters from above and below were separated, making the sky. Waters were brought together on the third day with land appearing, naming the earth and sea. On day four, the sun, moon and stars were created to allow days, seasons and years. Creation of the birds and sea creatures came on the fifth day with animals and man created on the sixth day. And it was good.

Seven swans a swimming—gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, wonder, right judgment, knowledge, courage and reverence.

Eight maids a milking—the eight beatitudes as described in Matthew. Blessed are: – the poor in spirit; – they that mourn; – the meek; – those who hunger and thirst; – the merciful; – the pure in heart; – the peacemakers; – they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Nine ladies dancing—nine fruits of the Holy Spirit as described in Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

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Ten Lords a leaping—the 10 Commandments: 1. Worship one God. 2. Don't worship idols. 3. Don't swear in the Lord's name. 4. Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. 5. Honor your father and mother. 6. Do not murder. 7. Do not commit adultery. 8. Do not steal. 9. Do not lie. 10. Do not desire your neighbor's wife.

Eleven pipers piping—the 11 faithful disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, a second James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Thaddeus, Simon.

And finally the 12 drummers drumming—12 points of the Apostles' Creed.

Wow! That packs a lot of punch with tremendous underlying meaning. Fa la la la la la la la!
Merry Christmas!

LORI PANKONIN is co-publisher of Johnson Publications newspapers in Imperial, Wauneta and Grant, and part-owner of the Holyoke Enterprise in Holyoke, Colo. E-mail: ljpank@chase3000.com