

## The Meaning of the Twelve Days of Christmas

Many of us have heard the song The Twelve Days of Christmas and dismissed it as a nonsense song. After all, who would want a partridge in a pear tree for Christmas? But it turns out that the song may in fact hold religious symbolism. Here is what some people believe the gifts of the song really symbolize:

**A Partridge in a Pear Tree**—The partridge, a bird that feigns injury when predators are near to distract them from her nestlings and make them attack her instead, represents Jesus, who sacrificed himself to save us. The pear tree represents goodness and holiness, since it was one seen as the opposite of the tempting, sinful apple tree that caused humanity to be cast out of Eden.

**Two Turtle Doves**—represent the Old and New Testament coming together to give us God's word.

**Three French Hens**—represent the three Theological Virtues of faith, hope and charity.

**Four Calling Birds**—represent the four Gospels who preach or called out the message of Jesus.

**Five Golden Rings**—represent the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the bible, which tell of humanity's fall from grace.

**Six Geese a-Laying**—represent the six days of creation, just as the geese are creating new life.

**Seven Swans a-Swimming**—represent the seven sacraments. Alternatively, represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**Eight Maids a-Milking**—represent the eight beatitudes

**Nine Ladies Dancing**—represent the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit

**Ten Lords a-Leaping**—represent the ten commandments

**Eleven Pipers Piping**—the eleven apostles who were faithful to Jesus

**Twelve Drummers Drumming**—the twelve points of doctrine set down in the apostle's creed.

### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello students of St. Mary's High School, can you believe we are almost finished with the 2011 school year? Time is flying and we are nearing the start of a new beginning. It is always a good idea to approach situations like New Years Day with goals, or, resolutions as they are more commonly known as. The problem with our own human nature is that we tend to be eager and passionate towards the start of something new and exciting, like a plan to regularly visit the gym, or reconnect with old friends. But the motivation starts to decline when days turn into weeks, and weeks turn into months and we disregard our initial enthusiasm and forget what we promised ourselves. So, I propose a change to disrupt the cycle of not achieving goals. The 2012 year should be about setting the bar high and surpassing it, for the benefit of oneself and others. Strive to persevere, learn, and change lives, even if it starts with your own. Appreciate what you have, cherish your family and friends, and on behalf of the SMH Edition staff, have a very Merry Christmas.

Sandra Czekajlo

### Riddle Of The Month

A poor farmer went to the market to sell some peas and lentils. However, as he had only one sack and didn't want to mix peas and lentils, he poured in the peas first, tied the sack in the middle, and then filled the top portion of the sack with the lentils. At the market, a rich innkeeper came by with his own sack. He wanted to buy the peas, but he did not want the lentils.

Pouring the seed anywhere else but the sacks is considered soiling. The farmer can't cut a hole in his sack.

How would you transfer the peas to the innkeeper's sack, which he wants to keep, without soiling the produce?



SMH Students Making Headlines

# Edition.

Volume X Issue III December 2011

### From Upside Down to Right Side Up: The Evolution of the Christmas Tree By Sonya Pihura, Grade 12

As Christmas draws near, we all scramble to get ready for the holidays. We bake pastries, wrap presents, put up lights and send out cards. However, all of these traditions would feel incomplete without a Christmas tree. Most of us wouldn't feel that our preparations were fulfilled until the tree was all set up, lights twinkling and ornaments gleaming. It is hard to imagine Christmas without a tree, but few of us know the story behind this symbol of the season.

Decorating with evergreens dates back to before the time of Christ. In many ancient civilizations, plants that stayed green all winter were believed to have special meaning, and were placed around the home to ward off illness and evil spirits in the winter. In ancient Rome, the winter solstice was celebrated by exchanging gifts as a show of affection and decorating the home with evergreens. The sight of the plants reminded people that winter was half over, that the days would soon grow longer, and that greenery would return to the land. In northern Europe, pine tree branches were placed over temple doorways to symbolize of eternal life.

Then, in the 7th century, an English monk went to Germany to preach Christianity. He used the fir tree's triangular shape to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity, with the points representing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The people called it God's Tree and it became a symbol of Christianity in central Europe. At Christmastime, people would bring pine trees into their houses and hang them upside down from the ceiling to decorate for the holiday! Later on, the tradition changed to having the

tree standing upright, and decorating it with paper flowers, pastries and tinsel.

It was not until the mid 1800's that the Christmas tree became the widespread tradition that it is today. In 1846, Queen Victoria was on the throne in Britain. She was married to Prince Albert, of Germany, who brought the custom of decorating a pine tree with him from his homeland to England. Queen Victoria was very popular amongst her subjects and anything she did was copied. Therefore, because the Queen had an evergreen tree decorated for Christmas in her palace, everyone that admired her had an adorned tree in their home as well. This trend spread throughout Britain and many of its colonies, and continues today.

Whether the evergreen is decorated or plain, upside down or right side up, from the before Christ's birth or after, its symbolism has remained constant. It is a physical representation of hope, faith and eternal life. So, Merry Christmas everyone! And start decorating those evergreens!



Find us online at :  
<http://stmary.wcdsb.ca/>

### Upcoming Events for January

January 11th— Graduation Meeting for Grade 12 Students

January 16th—Locker Clean Out and Textbook Check Day

January 16th-17th— GRT Semester 2 Bus Pass Pick up —Lunch Period—Upper Forum

January 17-20— Graduation Fee Collection 8:20-8:50— Board Room

January 18th-20th— Grade 9 EQAO Math Assessment Exam Schedule

January 26st - Period 2 Class, Period 1 Evaluation

January 27th— Period 3 Class, Period 2 Evaluation

January 30th - Period 4 Class, Period 3 Evaluation

January 31st - Period 4 Evaluation 9:00-11:00  
Credit Rescue 11:30 –1:30

## Real Christmas Music

Christmas just isn't the same without the yearly traditions, especially the music. Wintry-themed carols such "Jingle Bells" reflect the weather, but I've come up with a list of my favourite Christmas songs that have powerful messages, and are more meaningful to me—especially during this time of the year

### *My Grown-Up Christmas List*

This song has been done by many artists, but with every version the powerful lyrics teach us that material possessions are worthless compared to true Christmas presents such as being a friend, and loving others. It is from the perspective of an adult reflecting on their Christmas List for "a world in need". Some great versions are sung by Amy Grant and Kelly Clarkson.

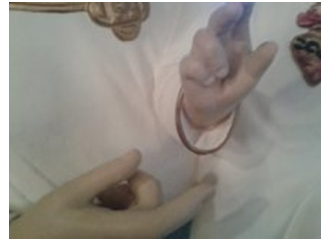
### *Do they know it's Christmas Time? By Band Aid*

This is a group formed by social action-oriented recording artist Bob Geldoff who was joined by many other stars of the 1980's to sing this haunting song. They raise awareness about people in developing countries who don't celebrate Christmas with lavish purchases as we Westerners do, but instead continue to hunger for the basic necessities of life. A great song, but be sure to read the lyrics, as they are the most powerful part!

### *Snoopy's Christmas*

This song is a bit of a Christmas tradition in my family. It tells the story of the famous Charlie Brown character

Snoopy who is a valued pilot in the First World War. He is called to fly on Christmas Eve to pursue the Red Baron. Snoopy soon becomes cornered, and just as he is about to give up, the Baron cries out "Merry Christmas, my friend!" They share a temporary truce over a "Holiday Toast", salute each other, and then go their separate ways. Though a simple and juvenile approach to peace, this song nonetheless echoes God's important teaching; love your enemies. This Christmas, please take the time to listen to these songs, and reflect on the messages. I hope they can change your mindset, Merry Christmas!



## SMH Find Me!

**Hello students of SMH,  
We have a game for you,  
Each month the paper's publishing,  
Here's what you must do,  
Look at our new picture,  
Of something in the school,  
And see if you can find it,  
If you can, that's pretty cool!**

**Last month's picture was taken on the first floor,  
outside of the stairwell by the gymnasium hallway.**

## 7 Stories, 13 Personalities, 3 Great Nights

**By: Anne Marie Hayman**

Suspense and laughter came from Alumni Hall the nights of November 30th through to December 2nd in St. Mary's first semester play *7 Stories*, written by Canadian playwright Morris Panych. Student directed by myself, with the help of Tim Pagett, auditions took place in September, and the rehearsal process began with the wonderful cast of 13. *7 Stories* tells the tale of MAN, a gentleman of the 80s trapped by consumerism, capitalism, and the life he lives. After waking up and coming to terms with his stagnant life, MAN decides to kill himself by jumping off a building. However, things do not go as planned as he encounters the lives of 7 different sets of characters and their stories, all while standing on the ledge of the 7th story of the building. This thought provoking play made the cast, crew, volunteers and audience reflect on the meaning of identity, and what they hold important in each of their lives. The talented and hardworking cast and crew consisted of: Tim Pagett, Christann Efthivolou, Derek Griffioen, Joey Ulmer, Piotr Mrugacz, Jessica Bowmer, Mary Adams, Liam Dowling, Lina Slabon, John Kruzlics, Natalie Scagnetto, Eilish Tookey, Makayla Walker, Haley Russell, Samantha Nemece, Sera Walker and AmyBeth Casselli, as well as the numerous volunteers for props, costumes, hair and makeup.

I am very thankful for the opportunity that was given to me to direct the first semester play. It was an amazing experience for everyone involved, and created lots of laughter and reflection for all audience members.

If you did not get a chance to see or audition for the first semester play, do not fret. Mr. Cheeseman is directing St. Mary's second semester production – *The 3 Musketeers*. The 3 Musketeers will be performed in May with auditions coming up soon. So stay tuned theatre lovers and keep supporting the arts.

## A Brother Like That

By Dan Clark

A friend of mine named Paul received an automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car, Mister?" he asked. Paul nodded. "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded. "Boy, I wish ..." He hesitated. Of course Paul knew what he was going to wish for. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels. "I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that." Paul was astonished. He asked the boy, "Would you like a ride?" After a short ride, the boy turned and his eyes aglow, said, "Will you stop where those two steps are?" He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car. "There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a cent. And someday I'm gonna give you one just like it ... then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about." Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride. That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when He had said: "It is more blessed to give..."



## The Little Girl with the Toothless Grin

by: Sharon Palmer



I was doing some last-minute Christmas shopping in a toy store and decided to look at Barbie dolls for my nieces. A nicely-dressed little girl was excitedly looking through the Barbie dolls as well, with a roll of money clamped tightly in her little hand. When she came upon a Barbie she liked, she would turn and ask her father if she had enough money to buy it. He usually said "yes," but she would keep looking and keep going through their ritual of "do I have enough?" As she was looking, a little boy wandered in across the aisle and started sorting through the Pokemon toys. He was dressed neatly, but in clothes that were obviously rather worn, and wearing a jacket that was probably a couple of sizes too small. He, too, had money in his hand, but it looked to be no more than five dollars or so, at the most. He was with his father as well, and kept picking up the Pokemon video toys. Each time he picked one up and looked at his father, his father shook his head, "no." The little girl had apparently chosen her Barbie, a beautifully-dressed, glamorous doll that would have been the envy of every little girl on the block. However, she had stopped and was watching the interchange between the little boy and his father. Rather dejectedly, the boy had given up on the video games and had chosen what looked like a book of stickers instead. He and his father then started walking through another aisle of the store. The little girl put her Barbie back on the shelf, and ran over to the Pokemon games. She excitedly picked up one that was lying on top of the other toys, and raced toward the check-out, after speaking with her father. I picked up my purchases and got in line behind them. Then, much to the little girl's obvious delight, the little boy and his father got in line behind me. After the toy was paid for and bagged, the little girl handed it back to the cashier and whispered something in her ear. The cashier smiled and put the package under the counter. I paid for my purchases and was rearranging things in my purse when the little boy came up to the cashier. The cashier rang up his purchases and then said, "Congratulations, you are my hundredth customer today, and you win a prize!" With that, she handed the little boy the Pokemon game, and he could only stare in disbelief. It was, he said, exactly what he had wanted! The little girl and her father had been standing at the doorway during all of this, and I saw the biggest, prettiest, toothless grin on that little girl that I have ever seen in my life. Then they walked out the door, and I followed, close behind them. As I walked back to my car, in amazement over what I had just witnessed, I heard the father ask his daughter why she had done that. I'll never forget what she said to him. "Daddy, didn't Nana and PawPaw want me to buy something that would make me happy?" He said, "Of course they did, honey." To which the little girl replied, "Well, I just did!" With that, she giggled and started skipping toward their car. Apparently, she had decided on the answer to her own question of, "do I have enough?" I feel very privileged to have witnessed the true spirit of Christmas in that toy store, in the form of a little girl who understands more about the reason for the season than most adults I know!

May God bless her and her parents, just as she blessed that little boy, and me, that day!