

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS



REV. JUDE WINKLER, OFM Conv.

Imprimi Potest: Mark Curesky, OFM Conv., Minister Provincial of St. Anthony of Padua Province (USA)

Nihil Obstat: James T. O'Connor, S.T.D., Censor Librorum

Imprimatur: ✦ Patrick J. Sheridan, D.D., Vicar General, Archdiocese of New York

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SILENT NIGHT

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

A LONG with Christmas cards, Christmas carols are one of the warmest memories that most of us have at Christmas time. In many cities, people still go from house to house, singing these simple songs that come from Europe and America. We hear their melodies in stores as we shop in the month of December. Every Christmas special on TV has our favorite singer or a chorus singing these wonderful songs. Then they are sung by the whole community as we gather for our Christmas Masses on Christmas Day and in the weeks after Christmas.

One of the most beautiful of these songs is “Silent Night, Holy Night.” It was written almost by accident. Father Joseph Mohr, a priest from a small village in Austria, was getting his church ready for Christmas Midnight Mass in 1818. He discovered that the Church organ would not work. The mice had eaten out the cloth parts of the organ and it would not play.

Father Mohr was worried that there would be no music for Christmas. So he asked the schoolmaster, Franz Gruber, to set a Christmas poem he had written to music. Gruber worked on the song for the rest of the day, and then that night they sang their song, “Silent Night,” to the music that he played on Father Mohr’s new guitar. That night, Franz Gruber’s wife turned to him and said, “I am proud of you! People will sing your carol long after we both are dead.”

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

AS we read through these Christmas customs, we should be able to recognize some of the things that we do in our own country and some things that seem unusual to us. Because our ancestors have come from all over the world, we often have a mixture of customs that we follow — some from our own family and others from the families of friends.

One of the things that many people have complained about in recent years is that Christmas has become too commercial. People are worried about presents and cards and all the other preparations, but they forget the real meaning of Christmas. It is the birth of the Baby Jesus, God's message of love to each one of us.

Christmas should be spent in a way that reminds us of that message. We should tell the story of the birth of Jesus and sing about it in our carols. We should remember the true meaning of our Christmas tree and our manger sets. We should say a quick prayer every time we wish someone a Merry Christmas.

We should thank God for our families and remember that they are God's greatest gift to us. We should also remember those who are not as fortunate as we are because they are poor or homeless, and maybe we should think of sharing some of our gifts with them.