Christmas Essay, Research Paper

﻿ Christmas

The year’s most celebrated holiday is celebrated on December 25th, both in homes

and churches worldwide. The meaning for Christmas is to recognize Christ’s birth,

of which the exact date is not known. During the fourth century the Bishop of Rome

set December 25th as Christ’s birth date. Some authorities claim that the choice of

December 25th was made because it coincided with Chanukah, Mithraic’s feast of

the sun god, and the people of northern Europe’s winter solstice feast.

Holiday Greenery

Evergreens, the symbol of eternal life, have long been used for Christmas time

decorations. The Christmas wreath represents everlasting life and God’s endless

love for us. Kissing under a mistletoe supposedly started out when early Roman

enemies stopped fighting when they met under a mistletoe. Holly is the most known

Christmas greenery, and there are several legends about it. One is that Jesus’ crown

was made of holly, and the holly berries represented his blood.

The Christmas tree: The Christmas tree is an evergreen trimmed with lights,

decorations, and tinsel, is derived from a “paradise tree”, or the tree in the Garden of

Eden. (Encarta 2000) The use of the Christmas tree began early in the 17th century,

in Strasbourg, France, spreading from there through Germany and then into northern

Europe. In 1841 Prince Albert introduced the Christmas tree to Great Britain, where

from there immigrants brought it to the United States. (Encarta 2000)

Santa Claus

The beginning of gift giving during Christmas started from the three wise men, with

their three gifts for the Christ child. Since then people have made up different things

to tell their children where their Christmas presents came from. The historical Saint

Nicholas was known in early Christian legends for saving storm-tossed sailors,

standing up for children, and giving gifts to the poor. Although many of his stories

can’t be proven true, his legend spread throughout Europe, and he was soon know

for his extreme generosity and gift giving. Many stories include him riding through

the sky on a horse and wearing his red bishop’s cloak, sometimes accompanied by

Black Peter, an elf whose job was to whip the bad children. His most known legend

is when he would walk through the streets in his bishop clothes, carrying a sack full

of presents, and leaving a gift on the windowsills of children’s houses.

From the different parts of the world, there are different names, but the spirit of

Christmas remains the same. Spanish children call their Santa Balthasar, children in

Italy have a female Santa named La Belfana, Denmark has a gnome named Jule-

Nissen, Holland has Sinter Klaas, Germany has Sanct Herr, and there are even some

places that believe the Christ child brings their presents. (Encarta 2000)

The Christmas Feast

On Christmas day, the year’s greatest feast was served, people went, and still do, all

out. Although now we have different foods, the idea is still the same. The feast was

started off with drinks and music, followed by a procession of the food. Once

everyone was seated, the food was served and eaten, after dessert, people drank and

danced. The banquet lasted hours and was the highlight of the day. Some of the

food served was: beef, meat pies, roasted duck, geese, pigs, plumb porridge, fancy

cakes, bowls of wassail, and toast. Christmas was a huge celebration filled with lots

of eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and gift giving.

Christmas Decorations

Centuries ago, Romans decorated their homes, public buildings, and temples on

festive occasions, and we have followed this ancient custom. During Christmas

time, store windows, malls, streetlights, and parking lot poles are decorated to

celebrate this joyous time filled with shopping, gift giving, and happiness. Some

popular and well-known Christmas decorations are: New York’s Rockefeller Plaza’s

Christmas tree, when set up, the first lighting of the tree signifies the official opening

of the Christmas season. Another popular attraction is Christmas Tree Lane, in

Fresno, California. People there string lights around the great cedars lining Van

Ness Avenue. Homeowners there also set up holiday displays on their lawns and

houses. (Encarta 2000)

Bibliographies

Sechrist, Elizabeth Hough. Christmas. World Book Encyclopedia. 3rd. ed. 1966.

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http://www.soon.org.uk/christmas.htm