

## Church, Home Devotions Demonstrate Holy Meaning of Christmas Holiday

More than a holiday, Christmas is a holy day. In church services and private devotions, Christians commemorate a night of awe and wonder nearly 2,000 years ago, when a Star shone above a Child born in a manger, when angels sang and shepherds watched. Dec. 25—as even the youngest children know—is the date. And yet, in the first centuries of the Christian church, there was no celebration of the birth of Christ, no Christmas.

There were festivals in the Decembers of those times, but they were pagan festivals.

### Celebrate the Sun

Dec. 25 was the date of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun—Mithras, the Persian god of light. Teutonic tribes in Northern Europe celebrated the rebirth of the sun at the winter solstice with a Yuletide season of feasting and rejoicing, while the Roman's winter festival, the Saturnalia, was held at about the time that is now the Christmas season.

How then did Dec. 25 come to be, not a day of pagan festivals, but a day dedicated to Christian devotions?

Some scholars believe that the Christian church may have set Dec. 25 as Christ's birth date in order that the traditions of winter festivals might be hallowed by association with the Nativity. When the date was established in the fourth century A. D., other dates that were considered included Jan. 1, March 21, March 29, April 9 and Sept. 29.

### Festivals Gain New Meaning

Christmas began to be generally celebrated on Dec. 25 in the fifth century A. D. People continued the familiar merry-making

customs of the winter festivals, but they linked them to Christmas instead of to pagan revelry.

Where formerly pagan peoples had looked to mythological gods of the sun as source of the rebirth of light, now they gradually changed to religious observances of the Saviour's birth with its symbols of faith, hope and life eternal.

From the winter festivals come many of the traditions that are now part of Christmas. The Roman Saturnalia provided a model for Christmas feasting, the giving of gifts and the burning of candles.

Christmas lighting also derives from winter solstice rites, where lights played an important part. The Teutonic Yule feast contributed the customs of the Yule log and wassail bowl.

### Gifts Gain Deeper Meaning

When winter festivals merged with Christmas, customs such as gift-giving gained a new and deeper meaning.

Christians felt that they should celebrate Christ's birthday with "gifts" for Him—commemorating Christmas with a renewal of resolve to perfect the virtues of generosity, compassion, peace, gratitude and reverence. Giving to the less fortunate became important.

As Christmas became a holy day, many people began exchanging presents on other days. St. Nicholas' feast day, Dec. 6, or Epiphany, Jan. 6, for instance. In some countries these customs still continue, with Christmas reserved solely for worship.

### CHRISTMAS IN 1492

First Christmas in the New World was celebrated in 1492 by Christopher Columbus and his crew, who were dinner guests of an Indian chief, ruler of the island of Haiti.



THE NIGHT CHRIST WAS BORN has been commemorated by artists throughout the ages. One of the first to show the Christ Child in a humble manger scene was Renaissance Painter Bernardino Luini, whose painting, "Adoration of the Christ Child," is reproduced above. With the Holy Family is a shepherd, and in the background other shepherds are shown with their flocks, as the angels bring glad tidings of the birth of Christ. The painting, from the Samuel H. Kress collection, is now at the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art in New Orleans.

## Nyssa's Exchange Student Stresses Love, Joy and Gratitude in Christmas

By LEILA ALAMPAY

(Editorial Note: With touching simplicity, yet with almost poetic grandeur, Miss Alampay describes her emotions during her first Christmas season in the United States. Judging from our reaction, the beauty of expression by this 17-year-old exchange student from the Philippines will bring a lump to the throat, a tear to the eye. The self-termed "little girl" has a command of the written word that could well be the envy of her many Nyssa friends who have had more exposure to the English language.)

Love, joy, gratitude and all shades of sentiment—these we do not fail to notice when the Christmas holidays come with the early morning chill, the cold wind, the pines and the glittering lights.

Whatever feelings there are, we see them in greater magnitude against the great significance of the day of Christ's birth. Faith and love embrace the whole human race closer together, and, along with the wish for peace and good will, come the little individual wishes.

Christmas is the spirit of giving. It is the day people eat more than what is enough for them and wish for things they wish to have. Christmas is a day for dreaming—dreaming of something that's unusual and exciting.

A girl used to dream of having a white Christmas. That's something impossible, because it does not snow in her country, and sometimes her friends would laugh at her crazy ideas. She used to dream of making snowmen and having a snowball fight with her friends.

One thing more, she wanted a father! Her father died when she was a baby, and she needed one badly, because the other kids had one. She prayed to the Little Child in the manger to make her dreams come true. She even tried her best to be a good girl, so that Santa Claus would fulfill her wishes for her.

Now, her friends won't be laughing at her anymore. Her dreams have been and will be fulfilled at last! She will miss the celebration back home, but she is determined to have a different Christmas this year. Part of her dreams have come true, and she's expecting more of them to be fulfilled soon.

Love, joy, gratitude and all shades of sentiment—the air is full of them. The significance of Christmas means more to this little girl. Faith and love embrace the whole humanity together, and, along with the wish for peace and good will, come the little individual wishes; one of them, the little girl's wishes—MY wishes.



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## The Greetings



May the wonder and warm glow of Christmas give you great peace and joy with family and friends.

MAULDING CLINIC

## 'Community Tree' Feted Years Ago

By PAM ALEXANDER  
(Nyssa High Journalism Student)

Dr. J. J. Sarazin relates that distributing the presents such as candy and nuts from the big "community tree" on Main street was a main event of the Christmas season 25 years ago in Nyssa. People from surrounding areas brought their children to sing carols and join in the festivities.

If the weather allowed, Christmas events were held outside. Horse races, family games and caroling would constitute the entertainment. More of the Christmas activities were in the home than they are today.

Even if Christmas is much more commercialized now, shopping started a lot earlier then, since most of the citizens shopped in Boise and Ontario. Most of the presents were made in the home and candies and cakes dominated the gift list.

Large dinner parties with dancing at home were held on Christmas Eve. Boise also held celebrations in the theaters. They also had festivities in the streets.



## GREETINGS

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## Warm Wishes for Christmas



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