

**The Twelve Days of Christmas**  
**Rev. Krystal Goodger**  
**Matthew 2:13-23**  
**December 28, 2014**

Our service and sermon today takes place through reflections on some of our favorite carols. However many sermons we hear and however many scriptures we read or commit to memory, for many of us, it is the music of our faith that grounds and sustains us. Music moves many of us in ways that spoken or printed words just can't. Therefore it is right and fitting that we devote some time in worship to the music that moves our souls. Especially in the Christmas season, we have strong ties to the music of our faith – to Christmas hymns and carols.

Now it is a downright dangerous move to try to pick just a few carols to represent the hundreds of carols that, for various reasons, have become favorites of the many different people in our congregation. I'm not going to claim these carols as the dearest or even the best – I can tell you that, with these carols today and the ones that we've sung in the last few weeks, we've sung most of the Christmas carols in the hymnal. Some of the carols we've sung today will be your favorites; some will not be your favorites but perhaps will be someone else's. I trust you will find and have found this time of singing and sharing meaningful and enjoyable nonetheless.

I'm sure you have all heard the Christmas carol, "The Twelve Days of Christmas". Father Edward Dowling writes, "The carol dates back to the 16th century and its precise author is unknown. It has generally been assumed to consist of twelve nonsense verses built around a pretty melody. But Fr. Gilhooley, a chaplain at St. Mary's College, informs us that the carol was written by the English Jesuits of the 16th century for catechism and it is far from filled with nonsensical verses. It was written during a time of persecution. The carol is akin Scripture or books of the Bible like Revelations that used obscure symbols to hide its true meaning.

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" was written to educate the faithful in the doctrines of the faith and yet not be obvious to the persecutors. The numbers

are simply a mnemonic to help Catholics remember some basic facts. Recall the words of the song. “On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me: twelve drummers drumming, eleven pipers piping, ten 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.”

Let’s take a look at this song and what it means...

“The Twelve Days of Christmas” celebrates the official Christmas season which starts liturgically on Christmas Day and ends twelve days later on the Feast of the Epiphany. “My true love” refers to God, “me” is the individual Catholic. The “twelve drummers drumming” are the twelve basic beliefs of the Catholic Church as outlined in the Apostles Creed. The “eleven pipers piping” are the eleven Apostles who remained faithful after the treachery of Judas. The “ten lords a leaping” are the Ten Commandments. The “nine ladies dancing” are the nine choirs of angels which in those days of class distinction were thought important. The “eight maids a milking” are the Eight Beatitudes. The “seven swans a swimming” are the Seven Sacraments. The “six geese a laying” are the Six Commandments of the Church or the six days of creation. The “five golden rings” are the first five books of the Old Testament called the Torah which are generally considered the most sacred and important of all the Old Testament. The “four calling birds” are the Four Gospels. The “three French hens” are the Three Persons in God or the three gifts of the Wise Men. The “two turtle doves” represent the two natures in Jesus: human and divine or the two Testaments, Old and New. The “partridge” is the piece de resistance, Jesus himself, and the “pear tree” is the Cross.

Today we sang many of our favorite Christmas songs. After all, we are in the 12 days of Christmas. Whether it is through Christmas trees and decorations, nativities, or Christmas carols, my wish is that we stay in the Christmas spirit and celebrate Christmas all year long!

So the season of Advent ended last week, and the Christmas season began on Christmas, “We Wish you a Merry Christmas”, hope that you have a wonderful “Twelve Days of Christmas”, and pray for “Joy to the World.” Amen.