



ST. AN HERALD

Season's Greetings

Edenton, North Carolina, Thursday, December 25, 1980

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Christ's legacy: 'Love one another as I loved you'



ANNUNCIATION (center panel of Campin altarpiece) by Robert Campin, the Master of Flemalle. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Chloisters Collection.

Straw, 'Staff of Life,' for decorations

Although the Egyptians hand-threshed their wheat fields along the banks of the Nile as early as 5000 BC, it was not until the Middle Ages that this material was used for making ornaments for the home.

Most were designed with religious overtones, especially appropriate since wheat, from which straw comes, is considered to be "the Staff of Life." Others showed rural scenes and included wall hangings, wreaths, table cen-

terpieces and small figures.

A delightful story, dating back to early Slavic days, tells of the spiritual significance of straw. To allow them to take part in the grace of the Lord's humble birth, little children were not put to sleep in their usual beds on Christmas Eve. Instead, they were put to sleep on a bed of straw!

And, as a reminder that all the pleasures and special joys of this glorious holiday originated from

the Holy Child, straw was spread under Christmas trees and on the floor. Straw was used too, in the manger where the Christ Child was first placed.

Although their spiritual importance has lessened with the passing of time, straw ornaments are still popular as contemporary tree and home decorations. Straw spirals, sheaves of wheat and whimsical straw figures continue to express the universal warmth and love of the season.

Nativity is symbol of Christmas Spirit

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenus was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David.) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:1-11

This is the story of a simple woman who gives birth to a son, while away from home with her husband. It tells a story for all time, of the Nativity, and Bethlehem's hour of glory.

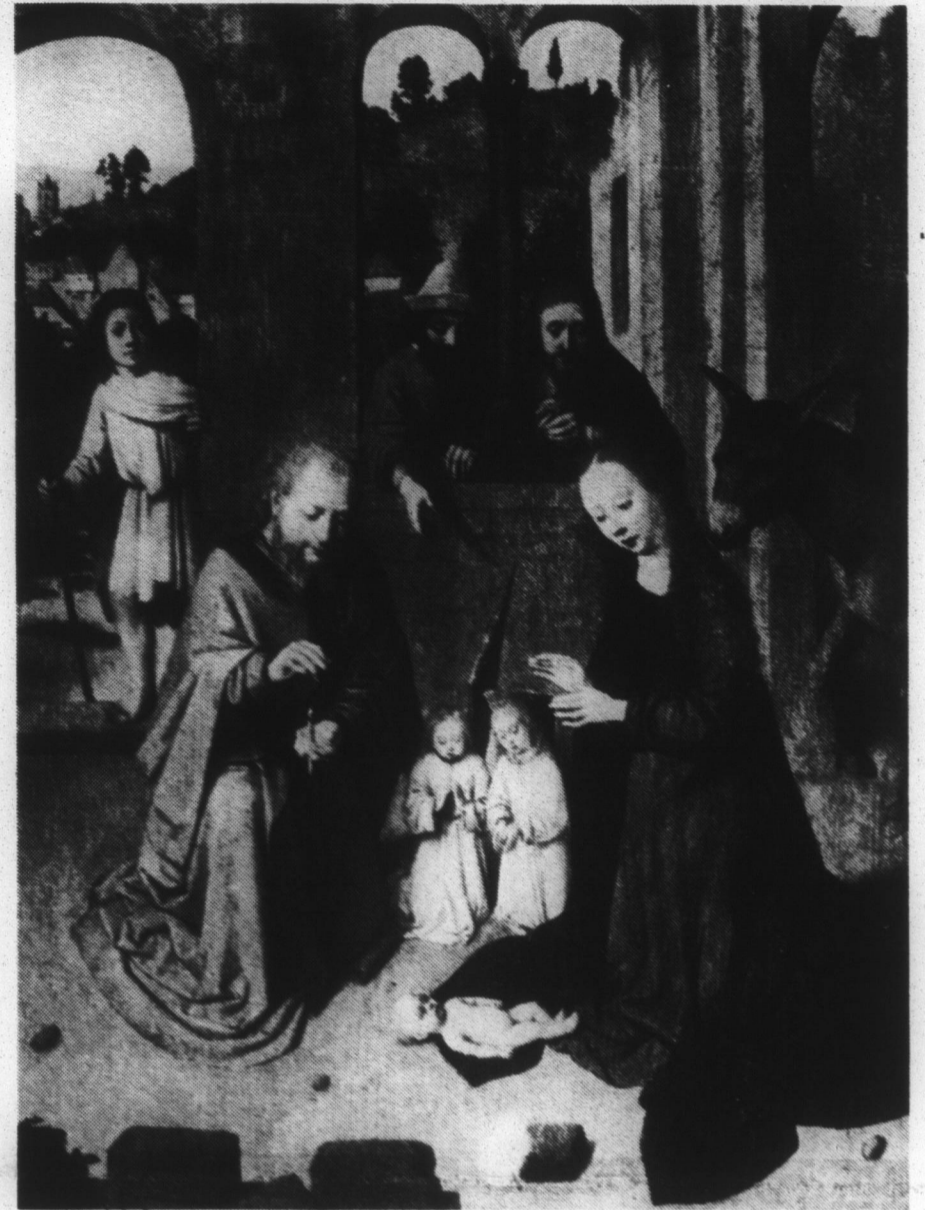
The first men to see and worship Jesus were the shepherds, tending their sheep when the Angel appeared with news of His birth. It seems fitting that the first witnesses to the birth of Jesus Christ were men of humble origin. They found Joseph, Mary and the Child in the stable. And they adored Him.

When they heard that the Son of God was born to Mary, rich and poor bowed down in worship. A Star appeared heralding the miraculous birth and guided the Three Wise Men to where Jesus lay. There the Magi presented their gifts and adored Him.

The Bible names the three gifts: gold, a precious metal; frankincense and myrrh, valued for their incense. There are rich, symbolic meanings to these gifts, as well. Many church scholars interpret the gold to mean Love or Christ as King of the World. Frankincense is considered to mean prayer or Christ as King of Heaven. The thorny myrrh means suffering or a symbol of Christ's approaching sacrifice.

The Gospels tell very little about Jesus' early years, but Christians everywhere are familiar with His deeds and words, which demonstrated His boundless love, mercy and charity. His teaching, solidly grounded in the Old Testament, carries a message of Love. Love of God. Love of one's neighbor.

The essence of Christianity is summed up in Christ's words (John 15:11): "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." This is Christ's legacy. His gift to the world!



ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS (center panel of triptych) by Gerard David. Tempera and oil on wood. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael Friedsam Collection, 1931.

Yuletide joy and glory voiced through festive carols, music

by Marjorie Miller

Through many centuries, Christmas carols have expressed the joy and glory of the Yuletide. Modern composers, too, have been inspired by the birth of the Christ Child to create some of their most celebrated works.

Music for Christmas began with musical prayers, or *liturgies*, of the Christian church. Carols, and the feelings that have inspired them, have endured for centuries. The word "carol," probably taken from the Greek word "choros," means a dance. Early medieval carols, suitable for dancing, were both religious and nonreligious.

In 1223, St. Francis of Assisi placed the first manger on display at Greccio, Italy, complete with living animals and stables of the Holy Family. The creche was taken up in many churches accompanied by singing of the Gospel message.

Soon, performers began acting out the events and composed carols to sing with their Nativity plays. Street caroling was born when the actors continued their singing as they strolled down the streets after the service.

Jacopone da Todi, born after the death of St. Francis, was one of the greatest of the early com-

posers, and his carols were famous all over Europe.

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" or "Adeste Fideles," one of the most popular of Christmas carols, was written by John Francis Wade in about 1742, a fact only recently come to light.

"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen," probably written about the 16th century, or earlier, is a great British favorite.

The words to "Silent Night" were written on Christmas Eve, 1818, by Father Josef Mohr, pastor of a church in Austria. The same night, the church organist, Franz Gruber, composed the music, and it was presented at Midnight Mass.

Phillips Brooks, an American minister, inspired by a visit to Christ's birthplace, penned "O Little Town of Bethlehem." The 19th century French composer Adolphe Charles Adam wrote "O Holy Night," and its familiar English words were written by John S. Dwight, an American minister. Some of the world's finest music has been created in celebration of this sacred holiday.

In 1734, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote his "Christmas Oratorio," a set of six cantatas composed to be performed one at each of six services between

Christmas and the Epiphany. The texts are taken mostly from Matthew and Luke. Today this masterpiece is performed as a single work.

George Friedrich Handel presented his "Messiah" in 1742. This work was completed in only 24 days, an incredibly short time considering that it takes nearly three hours to perform in its entirety.

Composers in the 20th century, too, have written music around the theme of the holiday. One of the most familiar of these is Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors," originally commissioned for television, and now an annual presentation.

Other major compositions are Benjamin Britten's "Christmas Cantatas," "St. Nicholas," and Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Fantasia on Christmas Carols."

And among the most popular classics are "Frosty the Snowman," "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "White Christmas," and "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town."

Festive carols and music will always be a joyful part of Christmas celebrations, helping people to express their happy and jubilant feelings!



Postcard Christmas greetings are becoming popular again after almost a century. This one was printed in Austria in the 1890s. Photograph courtesy of The Oakland (Calif) Museum.

Holiday superstitions

For thousands of years man was troubled by incidents and mysterious events which he believed were caused by good or evil forces. Many of these beliefs have been cast aside as man has come to understand the world about him. Others have persisted.

Some odd and amusing superstitions are identified with the Christmas season, an appropriate time for forecasting and fortune telling.

The weather on each of the 12 days of the holiday observance is supposed to foretell what the weather will be in each of the months ahead.

Good health is assured to those who eat an apple at midnight on Christmas Eve.

It's bad luck to let any fire in your house go out during the Christmas season...and woe unto those who let their evergreen decorations fall or who throw them away. You should burn them or feed them to your cow.

In Sweden, trolls are reputed to roam the countryside at dawn on Christmas morn. Best stay in bed.

You'll lose a friend before next Christmas if you don't partake of the traditional holiday plum pudding. And to refuse mince pie is to court bad luck for the following year.

In Greece, old shoes are burned during the Christmas season to prevent misfortune in the coming year.

In some countries, a child born on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve is considered lucky. In Poland, however, it is believed the child will turn into a werewolf, and, in Greece, that the new baby will turn into an evil, half-human monster called a Kalikantzaros.

A more familiar superstition is that on Christmas cattle kneel facing the East, that animals can speak, that bees hum and that all water turns to wine.

It is believed that a cherry tree branch, standing in water, will bring good luck if it blossoms by Christmas.

You'll have as many months of good fortune in the coming year as the number of berries in which you eat mince pie during the festive holiday.

Why wreaths used as decor

One of the most popular Christmas ornaments is the wreath, used to decorate doors, windows, mantles and holiday tables.

Its use can be traced to the Advent wreath of Lutheran origin, but its beauty and sense of joyous anticipation has made it popular with other English and American religious groups.

The advent season, a time of preparation for the coming of the Christ child, is celebrated on the four Sundays before Christmas.

Traditionally, the Advent wreath is made of evergreens interlaced with red ribbons, and holds four candles. One candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent, two the following Sunday, and so on, until the four candles are lit on the fourth Sunday.

The candles are lit as a symbol of the light that will come to the world with the birth of Jesus Christ.

To keep lines straight, anchor them to a wooden frame under the tree stand.

Hints to help with trimming that tree

Many people are baffled when it comes to using lights and decorations on a tree...how many...how best to hang them. If you're not sure, these hints will be helpful:

Stringing electric lights

For standard size bulbs, a good rule to follow is: three times the height of the tree, times the width. That figure equals the number of bulbs you need.

For miniature bulbs, make it four times the height, times the width. Before hanging lights on the tree, inspect strands for frayed, broken wires or exposed wires. Watch out for broken light sockets and plugs, too!

Light patterns

Your tree will be more interesting if you string the lights in a pattern. A tree looks better strung "upside down." Run wires vertically from top of tree to the base, tucking together at top.

To keep lines straight, anchor them to a wooden frame under the tree stand.

To create a spiral of lights, run two strands around tree diagonally, one clockwise, one counterclockwise.

Or drape strings in wavy loops for a pleasant, informal look.

"Icing" with tinsel

Tinsel should not just be tossed over a tree. Four to eight strands hung at the tip of a branch give a graceful, icicle effect.

Hang largest and heaviest ornaments at bottom of tree and taper sizes as you get toward the top, making sure flammable ornaments are not near lights.

Old-fashioned charm

An old-fashioned look is lovely and easy to do. Strings of popcorn, tufts of cotton and pine cones lend a charming air to a tree.

Cookies shaped like stars or Santa or animals add a "homey" touch...and don't forget little toys and candy canes!

'Visit from St. Nicholas' written as Christmas gift

by Marjorie Miller

"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."

These heart-warming and familiar words, so dear to all, complete Clement Clarke Moore's beloved poem, *A Visit from St. Nicholas*.

Dr. Moore, a classical scholar and part-time poet, wrote his immortal and whimsical poem on a cold Christmas Eve in 1822, as a present he had promised to his children.

Clement Clarke Moore is best remembered for having created the now popular image of Santa Claus, that happy, portly, white bearded figure, dressed in fur, smoking a pipe, and carrying a bulging sack of toys over his shoulder. It is thought that an old Dutch handyman who drove Dr. Moore's sleigh the night the poem was written was the model for the cherubic Santa figure.

Imagine how delighted the Moore children must have been with this colorful tale. How captivated, as their father read, "Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen! On! Comet, on! Cupid, on! Dooder and Blitzen."

The young family memorized the poem they loved so, although Dr. Moore thought little of it and relegated it to a desk drawer.

Sometime after the holiday, a family acquaintance, intrigued by the fascinating and spell-binding tale, sent a copy to her local newspaper, where it was reprinted. Unfortunately, she forgot to say who had written the delightful poem, and for some years it was reprinted "anonymously" in other papers and magazines.

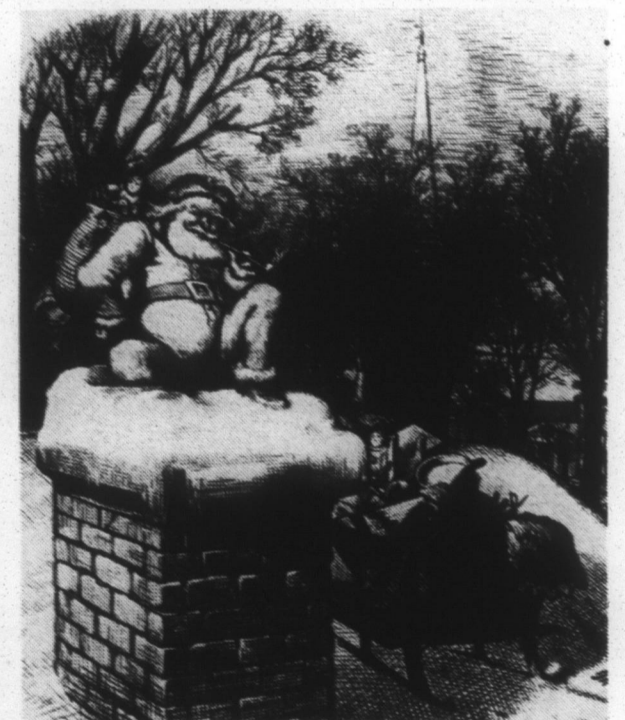
Later, in the 1860's, Thomas Nast, an American political cartoonist, created the round, kindly Santa we know, in his fur-trimmed red suit.

Some gift shopping ideas for those special people

'Tis Better To Give . . .

... than to receive. An old adage that rings true, merrily at the holiday season than any other time of the year. Searching out unusual gifts can add a spirit of adventure to holiday shopping.

Small shops and colorful boutiques with unique items abound in almost every city and town. Try to set some extra time aside for browsing before you shop. You'll enjoy it, and your



Although better known for his political cartoons, Thomas Nast also drew this charming scene of Santa Claus waiting for the children to go to bed on Christmas eve. The drawing appeared in Harper's Weekly, January 3, 1874. Courtesy of the New York Historical Society, New York City.

A collection of verse printed in 1837, called *The New York Book of Poetry*, carried Dr. Moore's poem with his name. And it was also included in a volume of Dr. Moore's poems, printed in 1844.

Although he did not consider *A Visit from St. Nicholas* a significant poem, it eclipsed all his other writings on the Bible and classical literature.

Clement Moore never received a single penny in royalties from his poem, although it has been reprinted countless thousands of

times. Almost every American child, and millions of other children all over the world, have been delighted by this endearing classic.

There is no estimating how many people have read or heard it in the dozens of languages in which it has appeared.

Dr. Clement Clarke Moore has been likened to the kindly, humorous figure he gave to the world, a man who brought joy to others and whose own reward was the happiness he left as his legacy.

made from natural ingredients.

A store that sells old clothing usually has beaded pouches that make really wonderful evening bags. And old crystal chokers and rope necklaces come in beautiful iridescent colors!

Many of these same stores have barely worn Chinese kimonos that can double as housecoats and as soft wraps over evening clothes. You're bound to come up with lots of clever ideas, so have fun!