

THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1958

For Christmas Eve

The Prayers of The Great Religions

OUR editorial column on Christmas Eve is devoted not to contemporary comment but to the prayers of great religions.

They illustrate the kinship of the spirit and the brotherhood of man in a season Christians hold closest to their hearts.

A General Thanksgiving

From The Book of Common Prayer; The Protestant Episcopal Church

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom, with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

The Great Vespers

From The Russian Orthodox Church

THE DEACON: Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord.
THE CHOR: Lord have mercy.

Secound us, save us, have mercy on us and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.
THE CHOR: Lord have mercy.

An evening all-perfect, hallowed, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.
THE CHOR: Grant it, O Lord.

An angel of peace, a faithful guide and guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.
THE CHOR: Grant it, O Lord.

Forgiveness and remission of our sins and trespasses, let us ask of the Lord.
THE CHOR: Grant it, O Lord.

That which is good and profitable for our souls and bodies, and peace to the world, let us ask of the Lord.
THE CHOR: Grant it, O Lord.

That the rest of our days may be spent in peace and penitence, let us ask of the Lord.
THE CHOR: Grant it, O Lord.

A Christian end to our life, painless, without reproach, peaceful, and good defense before the last Judgment Seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.
THE CHOR: Grant it, O Lord.

All Having in remembrance our most holy, undefiled, blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God, and ever-virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another, and all our life unto Christ our God.
THE CHOR: Unto Thee, O Lord.

Three Refugees

General Yogi, Mahayana Buddhism

HARD is it to be born into human life. We now live it. Difficult is it to hear the teaching of the Buddha. We now hear it. If we do not deliver ourselves in this present life, no hope is there ever to cross the sea of birth and death. Let us all together, with the truest heart, take refuge in the Three Treasures!

I take my refuge in the Buddha.

I take my refuge in the Dharma.

I take my refuge in the Sangha.

I take my refuge in the Three Jewels.

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Variety Of Ancient Customs Mark German Christmas

By ERNST-HELGE SCHOENFELDER

IN ALMOST every country where Christmas is celebrated, the last few weeks before this great feast are full of excitement and all kinds of preparations. The most prevalent of which nowadays seems to be the Christmas shopping. For commercial business it is a season of the year. If we think about it for a while we may begin to wonder what all this rustling and buying have to do with Christmas which we celebrate in commemoration of Christ's birth. Is it for His sake that we all exhaust ourselves so much in these preparations and commercial activities, which make us almost forget the true spirit of Christmas? Such questions and doubts are not being raised here in America, but also in Germany and other European countries where a modern way of life has been adopted. Yet, we still have many old customs and traditional habits that — by reviewing them — may help us to regain what has been lost in the past years.

CUSTOMS FROM GERMANY

Several American Christmas customs have come from Germany, where Christmas — the Mass of Christ — is the highest and innermost feast of the year. In Germany Christmas time begins with Advent, the season including the four Sundays immediately preceding the festival of the Nativity. In all the German lands, from Protestant Holstein in the north to Catholic Bavaria in the south, the Advent wreath will be found in every household. Made of branches of fir entwined with bright red ribbon, it serves as support for four candles and is usually suspended from the center chandelier of the drawing-room or placed on a table in the family living room. On the first Sunday of the season at eventide one candle is lighted — a solemn little ceremony in itself. Then each succeeding Sunday another candle is added till on the last Sunday before Christmas all four shed their mellow glow in commemoration of the sparkling Christmas tree to come.

MERRY CUSTOMS

In addition to the deeply religious and spiritual nature of the season, Germans also have several merry customs connected with it. Dec. 6, which falls within the Christmas season, is dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the patron of children, and on this day old Father Christmas, known in North Germany as "Knecht Ruprecht" and in other sections of the country as "Santa Claus" — a corruption of the Dutch name of the saint, Sant (N)ikolaas — goes from house to house admonishing and punishing the naughty children and rewarding the good ones with apples, nuts, and ginger cookies. Germany is the cradle of the candle-light Christmas tree as well as other customs now associated with this season and observed in one form or another throughout the Christian world. No German home, be it ever so humble, but has its Christmas tree. The tree is a comparatively recent development and is a strictly German custom that has spread elsewhere in the past century. The use of the fir or "Tannenbaum" originated in the Black Forest in southwestern Germany and from there was adopted in other sections of the country as symbol of the Christmas feast. It must date at least from the 18th century since it was well established at the time of Martin Luther. The custom was then carried to the New World by German immigrants.

For several years now the Germans of the Federal Republic have placed lighted Christmas trees along the border of the Soviet-occupied zone, primarily to show their countrymen on the other side of the dividing line that they are not forgotten and that they all are heartily praying for a prompt and peaceful reunification of their beloved country. In Germany Christmas is a truly family festival. The celebration may differ locally but the underlying thought is ever the same: light and love unto all men everywhere. In contrast to many countries, Christmas Eve in Germany is the principal feast, when families gather together, change gifts, sing the ancient car-



Charlotte Carol-Singers: A Heritage From Afar

ols and attend the midnight service in the church. Christmas Day is set apart for visiting friends and neighbors and partaking of the Christmas feast, the highlight of the day. Contrary to the custom in the United States, Germans celebrate the day after Christmas, also just as they celebrate Easter Monday.

SONGS OF CHRISTMAS

Most of the German carols derive from ancient hymns such as the well-known "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen" and "O du froeliche, o du selige gadenbrinende Weihnachtszeit" sung to the tune of the old Latin hymn "O sanctissima." Another special favorite is the hymn written by Martin Luther for his children and titled "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her." One of the widest known and most popular of all is the modern carol "Silent Night," the words of which were written on December

winding their way down to the village church for midnight mass, the moving lights appearing and disappearing like fireflies behind the high banks of milk-white snow. Many German poets and writers have let vivid descriptions of this picturesque scene.

NO 'PROSAC' ELECTRICITY

Only in a very few German homes will the Christmas tree be lighted with electric lamps, for every child in the family. Never would the children see the tree or any of the gifts before Christmas Eve, for it would anticipate and take away from them all joy and excitement connected with the distribution of the presents. In Germany it is the Christ Child that brings the gifts, and to Him the children address their wishes.

THREE INITIALS

The Christmas season closes on Tuesday night, January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany. In some districts young men dressed as the three Magi go from house to house singing carols, whilst in Bavaria and the Black Forest, the carol singers at this time are lithe children carrying lanterns of lighted tapers and usually a paper star, representing the star of Bethlehem, whence the name "St. Nicholas." In Silesia, the priest, accompanied by his acolytes, visits every house in his parishes and blesses it and its inmates whilst the acolytes chant the initials of the three Magi on the door — C for Caspar, M for Melchior and B for Balthazar. Nowadays this star singing is found mostly in the Rhineland, which is where it originally arose. On this day of the Epiphany the tree is then lighted for the last time to the accompaniment of the singing of general merrymaking. And the curtain falls once more on "the holy tide of Christmas."

Nowhere is the Christmas tradition more scrupulously observed than in the Bavarian Highlands. Towards midnight the peasants, carrying lanterns, can be seen

Long Way From Two Bits

Santa Every Day

By ROBERT C. RUARK

FALAMOS, Spain
IN THE midst of Yule, I have discovered a depressing statistic which is that, on an annual basis, 17 million teenagers will have spent nearly 10 billion dollars on gifts for their parents — quite apart, the statistics say, from anything their parents spent on them. By 1963, it says, the number of jumpy people who have risen to 24 million, and there will be about 14 billion claims on personal purchases.

TWO BITS' WORTH

It seems to me, puts Santa Claus in a dreadful position, since the number of jumpy people who have risen to 24 million, and there will be about 14 billion claims on personal purchases. I don't know how far you can trust a statistic not to turn and rend you, but according to today, the average weekly income today for a 13-year-old boy is over four dollars, over eight dollars at 16, over 16 bucks at 18, and girls making slightly less. Even with inflation that's a mess of money.

KIDS ON SALARY

I know one family of three children which has the kids on steady salary in return for the performance of stated chores around the house, with a bonus-incentive system for performance above and beyond the call, including grades at school. Out of this steady income, the kids keep rooms clean, manure the yard, work in the kitchen, and perform sundry other tasks generally allotted to parents or servants.

From a not-inconsiderable income, they pay for their sports and special treats, and amusement parks, Christmas and birthday presents, records and

even their dental service. That is not as coldblooded as it sounds, since the parents pick up the tab for general orthodontic work, but make the sprats pay for each filling as it becomes necessary.

SIMULTANEOUS ACRES

I ventured to the manna that having a tooth filled was rough enough without having to dip into the family fund for it, but the manna pointed out, with some reason, that the penalty decreased their consumption of candy, in the interest of general health, and encouraged more close attention to tooth-cleaning. She keeps an accurate log, but mother and I showed a sharp decline in cavity-plugging since the children felt simultaneous acres in both gaw and pocketbook.

DECLINE OF SANTA

I know that today, as an adult, that there is nothing I want in the way of gifts to make Christmas memorable, since it is obvious that if I wanted a new red sled I probably would have already bought it for myself, being a wage-earner. There is nothing left today of the delicious anticipation of the one big day out of 365 when good little boys and girls received their hearts' desire — or did not receive them, and so gave way to breakdown. I should imagine that Santa Claus of this time is no wise a man of such importance as the St. Nick of my time.

I suspect these were a great deal simpler in the pre-recession days, when a sack of candy and a dish of Brazil nuts meant something festive, even if Santa missed the chimney and forgot to leave the bicycle or the doll. There would always be another year, and you would surely get his address book updated.

'Aren't You Going To Hang Something For Santa To Fill?'



People's Platform

Needed: A System Of Junior Colleges

Editorial, The News

THE United States needs a system of junior colleges to take up where the high schools leave off and teach students how to live in a nation of machines and scientific processes. A whole new curriculum would have to be built up on the phases of living that have not been touched in the high schools.

Wrong About Date

However, I was wrong in the date of the Cronin interpretation. I had been informed by a prominent Catholic layman, a close friend of the priest's, that he published his interpretation just before the Pope died and after getting approval from the Vatican. My article was read

Conditions In America

"The Holy Father," wrote Father Cronin, "wrote against a background of current problems. . . In some countries, unions are heavily affected by ideology and politics, and the moral problem here is a man forced to join a Marxist union in order to secure work."

The Wrong Man

Democratic National Chairman Paul Butler wrote two private letters to Republican National Chairman Meade Auld last month, urging that they get together on selecting a convention city for 1960. When no acknowledgment came back, Butler tried the telephone and finally

Intolerance

The intolerance of the Catholic press toward anyone who makes an unintentional slip regarding Catholic dogma is a factor which helps breed intolerance toward a Catholic President. However, I still feel that there must be no discrimination against a political candidate because of religion, and in a future column we shall discuss this further.

Full Charge

What I really meant but didn't mention was that Vice President Nixon has taken full charge of choosing the GOP convention site. The vice president is carefully watching which city would do his candidacy the most good. He would like to put off a final decision for a few months to see whether Nelson Rockefeller will make a move for the nomination. If the Rockefeller ticket seeking delegates, Nixon will keep the convention away from Rockefeller territory where the latter's sympathies could peak the galleries.

Decline of Santa

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