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Christmas day mass schedule

Christmas Day is the first of the Twelve Days of Christmas. The period is viewed by Christians as the amount of time it took the three magi, or wise men, to travel to Bethlehem for the Epiphany, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the savior and the son of God ("epiphany" is from the Greek word for "revelation").While there's a consensus on what Christmas commemorates, what the Epiphany honors varies between churches and cultures. Some churches believe it's the day of Christ's baptism, while others celebrate it as the day the three magi visited Jesus with gifts.But there are also differences on when the twelve days are celebrated. Western churches, for example, celebrate Christmas on the Dec. 25, the Epiphany on the Jan. 6, and the period in between as the 12 days and nights of Christmas. Other cultures, however, have different customs.Although most in the Eastern Orthodox Church now adhere to the Western calendar, those in the Greek Orthodox Church still use a different religious calendar, celebrating Christmas on Jan. 7, and the Epiphany on Jan. 19. Some Latin-American cultures celebrate the Epiphany as Three Kings Day, giving gifts on Jan. 6 instead of Christmas. Other cultures will give one gift per day from Christmas to the Epiphany. This tradition has never really caught on in America, where the celebration of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is most common [source: Bratcher].The Twelfth Night, often celebrated on the night of Jan. 5, is considered the end of the Christmas season, before the Epiphany the following day. The Twelfth Night was a time for feasting in England (partly inspired by Shakespeare's play of the same name) in centuries past. Some cultures, like the French and Spanish, celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany with a king's cake, a coffee cake with purple, green and yellow icing to commemorate the visit by the magi to the Christ child. In western cultures, the King's Cake is associated with Mardi Gras, and the season of Carnival [source: Burnett]. Churches also vary in their celebration of the Epiphany; some Protestant churches celebrate it for an entire season, lasting until the season of Lent, while many Catholics celebrate it as a single day.But just because the song is associated with the holiday season, that doesn't mean you can't sing it the rest of the year. For more information about all things Christmas, visit the links that follow.How Much Is That Partridge in the Window?Since 1984, PNC Financial Services advisors have calculated the cost of the gifts from the Twelve Days of Christmas carol each holiday season. Everything is factored in, from eight maids to 10 lords to 12 drummers. You can find a chart of the cost of the Christmas Price Index (CPI) over the years. For those looking to get their true love these gifts, don't come with chump change: The total cost of all the items in 2014 was \$27,673 [source: PNC].Originally Published: Nov 21, 2007Page 2One of the most beloved Christmas traditions, especially in America, is decorating a Christmas tree. Most people think it's been around, well, forever. But the Christmas tree is actually a pretty recent holiday tradition. German immigrants brought the tradition here in the mid-18th century, yet 100 years later it still hadn't really caught on. In fact, it was downright controversial. The New York Times wrote an editorial against the practice in the 1880s, and when Teddy Roosevelt was president in the early 1900s, he railed against cutting down trees for Christmas, saying it was a waste of good timber [source: Shenkman]. The tradition, of course, took hold regardless.Despite Christmas' popularity among Christians and non-Christians alike, little-known facts like this -- and even outright myths -- abound. From the holiday's religious origins to Mr. and Mrs. Claus to that great, evergreen symbol, the Yuletide tree, here are 10 enduring Christmas myths, exposed at last.Say it ain't so! Yes, to the astonishment of many people -- including many Christians -- Christmas is not the most important Christian holiday. Despite the ribbons. Despite the tags. Despite the packages, boxes and bags. No, Christmas can't hold a candle to that powerhouse Christian holiday, Easter. And it's not just an Easter bunny versus Santa Claus thing, either.On Christmas, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, who they believe is the son of God. That's definitely an important event, and Christians spend a few weeks whooping it up, from Dec. 25 until sometime in January, depending on their exact religious affiliation. But Easter commemorates Jesus' rising from death into eternal life, which was not only a coup for Jesus personally, but for all of humankind, as his resurrection is said to have contained the promise of eternal life for all who believe in him [source: Martin]. Because Easter is so sacred, Christians spend nearly two months of the year celebrating the Easter season, far longer than they celebrate Christmas. Think of it this way. Everyone has a birthday. But not everyone can triumph over death.How many of us snuggle with family members every Christmas season to read "A Visit from St. Nicholas," aka "'Twas the Night Before Christmas"? This poem has been popular since it was first published in New York's Troy Sentinel on Dec. 23, 1823 [source: Conradt].The poem was published anonymously, and it wasn't until 1836 that someone stepped forward as the author: Clement Clarke Moore, a professor and poet. According to Moore, he wrote the poem for his kids, and later, unbeknownst to him, his housekeeper sent it to the newspaper. But once Moore claimed to be the author, members of the Henry Livingston Jr. family cried foul, saying their dad had been reciting the very same poem to them a full 15 years before it was published. Livingston, interestingly, was a distant relative of Moore's wife [sources: Conradt, Why Christmas].Who was telling the truth? At least four of Livingston's kids, and one neighbor, said they remembered him reciting the poem as early as 1807. He was also part Dutch, and many references in the poem are, too. Plus scholars who studied Moore's other written works say they're all vastly different in structure and content from "A Visit from St. Nicholas." But Moore did claim authorship first. He was also friends with Washington Irving, who knew all about Dutch culture and had previously written about St. Nicholas [sources: Howse, Conradt]. Add all these clues together and the question of the famous poem's authorship is still up in the air.If Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth, and Christmas is always on Dec. 25, then Jesus was born on Dec. 25, right? Nope. No one knows for sure when Jesus was born. The Bible mentions neither a month nor a date. Yet while Jesus may have been born on Dec. 25, it's highly unlikely, at least according to Biblical interpretations [source: Christian Answers]. Here's why.First, the Bible mentions that during Jesus' birth, shepherds were in their fields. But it's cold in Bethlehem in December, and nothing much grows in the fields, so shepherds sheltered their sheep around that time of year and stayed inside. The Bible also says Mary and Joseph were traveling to take part in a census. But back in Jesus' time, censuses were normally held in September or October -- after the fall harvest, yet before the harsh winter made travel difficult [sources: Christian Answers, Boyett].Finally, while Easter was celebrated by the earliest Christians, Jesus' birth wasn't considered a special day until about the fourth century, when the church wanted some kind of celebration to take the focus away from the winter solstice celebrations favored by the pagans. Voilà -- the church proclaimed Jesus' birth date as Dec. 25, and it became a major Christian celebration. Most scholars, incidentally, agree Jesus was likely born near the end of September, based on a host of additional Biblical clues [source: Boyett].You might have noticed that most ornament stores carry glass pickles. Ever wonder why? The popular story is that the pickles are part of a very old German tradition that went like this: On Christmas Eve in Germany, parents hid glass pickle ornaments deep within the fragrant branches of their trees, once all of the other ornaments were in place. The next morning, the first child to find the pickle ornament got an extra gift from St. Nicholas, while the first adult to find it (not counting the ones who hid it) would have good luck for the next year [source: German Pulse]. Not too shabby!Unfortunately, this cute tale is a myth. Most Germans say they've never heard of this practice, and it's definitely not a tradition. That's pretty good intel. But the tale has more flaws. In Germany, as in many European countries, St. Nick traditionally delivers his gifts on the night of Dec. 5, not on Christmas Eve. Christmas Eve is also the old German kids normally open their presents, not Christmas Day. So how did this story become so well-entrenched? It's still a mystery. Glass ornaments were being produced in Germany in the 16th century, and by the 19th century some Germans were crafting fruit- and nut-shaped ornaments. But that's about as close as we can get to figuring it out [source: German Pulse].Don't take "Christ" out of Christmas! That's the rallying cry of many Christians, who become quite frantic over what they view as sacrilege -- removing Christ's holy name from the important holiday, and replacing it with a simple X. A secular X. An impersonal, present-and-Santa-seeking X.But if we take a closer look, writing "Xmas" isn't a necessarily a slam against the son of God. Far from it. The word "Christ" in Greek is written "Χριστός." Notice anything familiar? The first letter is "X," or chi. Chi is also written as an X in the Roman alphabet. Rather than being an offensive abbreviation for Christmas, "Xmas" is actually a quite logical nickname [sources: Boyett, Bible Suite].This is a tricky one. The three are definitely different, yet sometimes can be considered the same. St. Nicholas was a fourth-century Turkish bishop who spent his life giving money to the poor, and it's said one of his favored methods was secretly leaving money in people's stockings overnight. Nicholas died on Dec. 6, and was eventually proclaimed a saint. Thus, Dec. 6 became known as St. Nicholas Day. Various cultures celebrated by instructing their kids to leave out stockings or shoes the night before so "St. Nick" could fill them with gifts like fruit, nuts and candy. [source: Why Christmas].By the 16th century, Europeans were turning away from the idea of St. Nicholas, yet they loved the gifting tradition. So St. Nick morphed into a guy named "Father Christmas." First mentioned in 15th-century writings, he was a partying dude associated with drunkenness and holiday merrymaking. In the U.S., St. Nick became Kris Kringle. Father Christmas and Kris Kringle generally brought gifts on Christmas, not Dec. 6. When Dutch settlers began emigrating to the U.S., they brought with them stories of St. Nicholas, whom they called Sinterklaas. Soon Sinterklaas became Americanized as Santa Claus [sources: Religion Facts, Why Christmas].By the 20th century or so, all of the Father Christmases, Kris Kringles, etc became "Santa Claus," uniformly depicted as a round-bellied, white-bearded old guy who brings gifts on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Yet some people around the world, namely Christians from European countries where St. Nick was a beloved hero, still celebrate St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 6 by setting out shoes or hanging stockings the night before. So while Father Christmas and Santa Claus are definitely now one and the same, St. Nicholas is still a toss-up, with some people recognizing him as a distinct individual and others lumping him in with the other gift-bearing men [sources: Religion Facts, Why Christmas].Gaspar (or Caspar), Melchior and Balthasar, three kings from the east, are said to have traveled a long way to see Baby Jesus, following a freakishly large, bright star and hauling gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh along with them. Alas, according to the Bible this is yet another Christmas miss, despite the presence of a trio of king figurines in all nativity sets.The Bible says magi came from the east, following a big star, and that they were looking for the King of the Jews. But magi are wise men, not kings. And the number of and names of the magi are never detailed anywhere in writing. Further, the Bible says the men arrived when Jesus was a young child, not an infant, and they found him at home with his mom -- not in a manger in a stable.Scholars believe the men were likely astrologers who arrived a year or more after Jesus' birth. Because three gifts are listed in the Bible, scholars also say it's possible that over time, people assumed this meant there were three men [source: Boyett]. The myth of their names emerged later, after a mosaic depicting the magi was created in the sixth century. The mosaic, housed in the Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy, contains the names Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar [source: Sacred Destinations].Lots of people have never heard of Boxing Day. Those who have -- and who know it falls after Christmas -- often think it's a day designated for boxing up any gifts you don't want, don't like or can't use, and taking them back to the store. Nice as that may sound to anyone who's used to receiving bum gifts, unfortunately it's completely wrong.Boxing Day is Dec. 26, and it's a celebration that takes place only in a few countries. It started in the United Kingdom during the Middle Ages as the one day of the year when churches opened their alms boxes, or collection boxes, and doled out the money to the poor. Servants were also given this day off to celebrate Christmas with their families, having had to work for their bosses on Christmas Day [source: Why Christmas].The holiday changed over time. In the years leading up to World War II, blue collar workers such as milkmen, butchers and newspaper boys used the day to run their routes and collect Christmas tips from clients. Today, in certain countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Boxing Day is a day when certain sporting events are held, namely horse races and soccer matches [source: Why Christmas]. What that has to do with alms for the poor -- or boxes -- is another mystery.This idea is false -- at least for now. As long as secular songs are included in a school holiday concert's repertoire, Christmas carols may also be sung [source: Gibbs, Jr. and Gibbs III]. But there's much debate over whether singing any sacred choral music in public schools is a violation of the U.S. Constitution's Establishment Clause. The Constitution's First Amendment says "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." This "Establishment Clause" is at the heart of many disputes over what people consider freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of religion [source: Kasparian]. As of now, however, there's been no ruling by the Supreme Court, and no Constitutional amendments, banning this practice. Some individual school districts, however, have banned Christmas music in school concerts [source: Rundquist].We hear about the dangers of Christmas trees -- especially real ones -- bursting into flames every year at Yuletide. Yet neither real nor artificial Christmas trees are that likely to catch on fire. First, real trees simply don't spontaneously combust, even if you forget to water them. And secondly, actual cases of any Christmas trees causing residential fires are extremely rare. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), between 2013 and 2017, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 160 home fires per year that began with Christmas trees, down from 240 in 2005-2009. Those 160 fires caused just two deaths and 14 injuries [source: National Fire Protection Association].With tens of millions of trees both fake and real sold every year, 160 fires is a pretty small percentage. Of course, this doesn't mean you should take unnecessary risks. If you have a real tree, water it regularly, and remember to turn off the lights when you're away. And remember that overloaded outlets and faulty wires are the biggest potential culprits when it comes to holiday fires [source: National Christmas Tree Association].Originally Published: Dec 11, 2012I'm so relieved Christmas trees aren't a major fire hazard, because I'd never want to give up my tree. And thank goodness my frequent use of the term "Xmas" isn't offensive. Now I'm going to go hang my pickle ornament on the tree, read whoever's "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and call it a day.Related ArticlesBible Suite. "Christos." (Nov. 30, 2012) Jason. "Debunking Christmas Myths." Relevant Magazine. Dec. 6, 2010. (Nov. 26, 2012) Stacy. "Who Really Wrote 'Twas the Night Before Christmas?'" Mental Floss. Dec. 24, 2010. (Nov. 29, 2012) Darlene. "Christmas Pickle: Myth or Reality?" German Pulse. Dec. 10, 2011. (Nov. 26, 2012) Jr., Dr. David C. and Dr. David C. Gibbs III. 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