

SAINT JUDE
FOCUS

www.stjudeshrine.org.uk



News from the Shrine of Saint
Jude - December 2025



Popular Prayers

A brand new prayer book from the Carmelites in Britain. Order from:
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WELCOME

WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE of *Saint Jude Focus* - updating the friends of Saint Jude - in our seventieth anniversary year.

Fr. Brendan recently reminded us that the central theme of Christmas always remains the same: God desires and chooses to make a home with us. The heart of our celebration is that God chose to live our human life so that we might find a way through Christ to live God's life. As an apostle, Saint Jude would never have tired in proclaiming this truth.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and all those whom you love a Blessed Christmas 2025 and a Holy 2026. May Saint Jude intercede for you and may Mary watch over you with maternal love!

Thank you for your support of the Apostle of Hope and his Shrine.

Matt



70 YEARS

WE ARE NOW IN THE SEVENTIETH anniversary year since the Shrine of Saint Jude was founded on 28 October 1955 and still in the special church jubilee as Pilgrims of Hope. You can see a photo from 1955 above.

This celebratory year is a precursor to many more celebrations coming up in 2026, as we will be celebrating one hundred years since the Carmelites returned to Britain after the Reformation.

This important moment back in 1926 eventually led to the founding of one shrine (Saint Jude) and the re-founding and return of the Carmelites to another (and much older) shrine at Aylesford Priory. We have a lot to be grateful for.

Thank you for all your support whenever you first started as a friend of Saint Jude - whether it was 100 years ago or more recent - thank you.



Christmas

HERE ARE THE ORIGINS of some of the Christmas traditions we still enjoy today, plus some other interesting facts.

Christmas Date

No one knows the actual birthday of Christ, so why was 25 December chosen to celebrate it? Early Christians celebrated Christmas (the Mass of Christ) on dates as widely apart as 1 and 6 January, 29 March and 29 September. The first choice of 25 December was made by Pope Julius I (337 – 352) and certainly since the end of the fourth century, it has been the date of Christmas.

The choice of date was not as random as it may seem though. It was a well thought out decision as mid-winter had always been a season of merriment for many pagans from whom the early church gained its converts. In Rome itself, the 25 December was observed as *Dies Natalis Invicti Solis* (the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun). In addition, the great Roman Saturnalia, a festival of light and fire, began on 17 December and was celebrated for seven days, followed swiftly by the New Year celebrations of Kalends.

In northern Europe, surrounded by icy winter, the solstice of 21 December was celebrated by the festival of Yule with lights, evergreens in the houses, the making of gifts, and fires blazing in the frosty air.

Thus throughout the Roman empire, this period of merriment was long established by Norsemen, Celts or Romans, so it was prudent to celebrate the birth of Jesus at this point of the year instead - it could then displace these old pagan festivals.



Snow in Whitstable, Kent

“...the thorn is a very famous tree in Christianity...”



Glastonbury Thorn

Christmas Customs

Each year a few days before Christmas, the Mayor of Glastonbury in Somerset, cuts sprays from the world-famous Glastonbury Thorn which is sent to the King for the royal table on Christmas Day. The Thorn is a very famous tree in Christianity. It is said that Saint Joseph of Arimathea visited Glastonbury soon after the Crucifixion to bring Christianity to its people and it is said he also founded the Abbey. He is said to have planted his thorn staff and it immediately rooted and flowered.

The boar's head was the favourite meal in England at Christmas for a long time. Later geese, capons, pheasant, bustards, swans, pickled oysters, and especially peacocks, were all equally popular and important. The turkey was a late arrival and by 1542, it appeared regularly on the English Christmas table. Great flocks of turkeys were kept in Norfolk and Suffolk and driven to London slowly as the season approached.

Mince pies were often made with oval pastry crust which was said to represent the manger in which Christ was laid.

The Roman and Norse customs of decorating the house with ever-greens was embraced by the early Christians. It was always seen as unlucky to bring the tree in until Christmas Eve and the tree had to be taken down before the Twelfth Night. Decorations could remain in churches until the end of the ecclesiastical Christmas season (Candlemas) but they too had to go before 2 February.

During the eighteenth century, schoolchildren produced Christmas pieces lettered on coloured paper to wish their parents the compliments of the season. Building on this, Sir Henry Cole (1808 - 1882) suggested the idea of a Christmas card to the artist John Callcott Horsley (1817 - 1903) in 1843. A thousand were printed on this occasion, but the die had been cast,

and over the next fifty years (helped by the new Royal Mail) it became very popular. Gift giving at Christmas is a survival of the Roman gift giving.

However you celebrate Christmas this year, we hope you have a lovely celebration of the birth of Christ.

by Matthew Betts

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CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION LOURDES PILGRIMAGE 21 - 28 August 2026



In 1858, Our Lady asked Saint Bernadette to tell the priests to “bring people here”. Since 1901, the Catholic Association Pilgrimage has been bringing pilgrims to Our Lady’s Shrine to answer that request.



We welcome anyone interested in visiting the beautiful shrine - our next pilgrimage is taking place on 21 - 28 August 2026.



Find out more:
www.catholicassociation.co.uk





Thank you for supporting us through prayer and donations during 2025.

Thank you for helping the Shrine to be here for seventy years - long may it continue to be here!

Our supporters have always been our greatest blessing, and you have made a huge difference, ensuring that our work serving God's people in the UK and around the world can carry on.

All our supporters are prayed for at the Shrine and by the friar communities throughout the Province - not just at Christmas!

We thank you very much for your continued support of the Shrine.

May God, who is never outdone in generosity, through the intercession of Saint Jude, bless you for your kindness and generosity.

Happy Christmas!




Become a member of the Guild of Saint Jude **TODAY**

1. Members share in the daily Masses
2. Members share in special Masses offered for them and their families each quarter
3. Members join the Shrine in daily prayers
4. Members receive a Handbook of Devotions, badge and certificate
5. Support the Shrine of Saint Jude

Membership is open to all those who have a devotion to Saint Jude

<https://tinyurl.com/GuildSaintJude>

 <https://tinyurl.com/JudeFB>

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