

The Carmelite News

NOVEMBER 1994



“Five for the symbols at your door . . . ”

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Would you believe it, but in 1644 the Puritan Parliament made it illegal to celebrate Christmas. Christmas day became a normal working day, and many specific christmas foods were banned - and magistrates had the power to enter any house to check that the law was being obeyed. One especial type of food came in for attack: **mince pies!** But you will say that we still have them. Yes, but they are round today, and that was not their original shape. The original shape of mince pies was oblong, and nestling in the mincemeat was a nut - in the best households an almond. The pie was in fact a miniature of the Infant Jesus in the manger, and that is what was banned by the Puritans. So to get round it, good Catholics made them round and left out the nut, but everyone knew what they were supposed to represent, or at least they did at the time. Now that knowledge is lost and no one realises what mince pies originally symbolised, except for fossil hunters like me. Here is another fossil to fascinate you. Part of the general protestant reaction against the faith was a concerted attack on the Mass, and the very word was to be avoided if possible. So words like Christ**mas**, Candle**mas**, Michael**mas** (as also in Daisy) were replaced by others such as Christtide and Michaeltide. These never caught on and we still use the old catholic names. Perhaps they failed because they were not strictly accurate. The old names referred to particular days on which that mass was celebrated. The word "tide" in this case means
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A twinge of conscience is a glimpse of God!

season, a period of time rather than a particular day - and it survives with this meaning (and here is another fossil for you) in the phrase "Time and tide wait for no man" which in origin has nothing to do with the sea. So rejoice in the faith as you eat your mince pies in this coming Christmastide. If you bake your own perhaps you could sneak an almond into each one and surprise your visitors!

GREEN RUSHES????

All this fossil hunting was inspired by a problem I come across in my other work. You may have forgotten - indeed, like me, never have known - the original symbolism of mince pies but we still grew up with a lot of traditional symbolism, which the Catholic Church has always used to make the serious meat of the faith attractive. In our rush to reveal the true meat, we have lost a lot and have failed to pass it on to the next generations of Catholics. And I for one miss some of it - although not all of it! And it was pondering this problem of how to pass things on that lead me to remember the old song *Green grow the Rushes, Oh!* that I asked about in the last issue. Apparently, this song contains a lot of religious symbolism, that would be passed on as it was sung in family gatherings before television brought social life virtually to a stop for most people. So if you were one of the people who wrote to me about the words of the song and their meanings, thanks for taking the trouble. And for those of you who don't know it, here it is, with an explanation of the likely meaning of the words. First the title. Nobody has found **any** explanation, let alone a likely one, for the words

Green grow the rushes, so they remain a mystery, although the true nature of the song is perhaps revealed when you know that in Dorset it is known under the title **The Twelve Apostles**. The rest of it is not too difficult once you know what to look for.

1. I'll sing you one, oh!
Green grow the rushes, oh!
 What is your one, oh ?
 One is one and all alone
 and evermore shall be so.
2. I'll sing you two, oh!
Green grow the rushes, oh!
 What are your two, oh ?
 Two, two the lily-white boys,
 clothèd all in green, oh!
 One is one and all alone,
 and evermore shall be so.
3. I'll sing you three, oh!
Green grow the rushes, oh!
 What are your three, oh ?
 Three, three the Rivals.
 Two, two the lily-white boys
 clothèd all in green, oh!
 One is one and all alone,
 and evermore shall be so.
4. I'll sing you four, oh!
Green grow the rushes, oh!
 What are your four, oh ?
 Four for the Gospel Makers
 Three for the Rivals, . . . etc.
5. Five for the Symbols at your
 door, four for the gospel
 makers, . . .
6. Six for the six Proud Walkers, . . .
7. Seven for the Seven Stars in
 the sky, . . .
8. Eight for the April Rainers, . . .

9. Nine for the nine
 Bright Shiners, . . .
10. Ten for the
 Ten Commandments, . . .
11. Eleven for the Eleven who went
 to heaven, . . .
12. Twelve for the
 twelve Apostles, . . .

Well, that is the words accounted for. In fact there are lots of variations but these are the commonest words. It is widely sung on occasions when a good community sing-song is going on. One such is the Passover Celebration for Jewish families, and there is indeed a completely Jewish version. One person also wrote to tell me of a version sung in Naval Messes, but we shall not mention that further here! From these words here it is clear that the phrases have been mangled over the years, but it is not too difficult to reconstruct what most of the original ideas were. So here we go: what the words were to help us remember.

1. That the Lord our God is One God,
 and eternal.
2. That Jesus and John-the-Baptist were
 boys together. (But no explanation
 of their being dressed in green.)
3. There are three equal Persons in
 the One God: Father, Son and
 Spirit. (Rival now means
 competitor, but originally it meant
 partner, equal, peer, as in Hamlet
 greeting two companions as "the
 rivals of my watch".)
4. That there are four Gospels
 traditionally ascribed to Matthew,
 Mark, Luke & John.
5. Difficult to be sure about this one,
 but either a five-pointed star drawn

I SING OF A MAIDEN

I sing of a maiden that is makéless*:
King of all kingés to her son she ches.**

He came all so stille there his mother was,
As dew in Aprille that falleth on the grass.

He came all so stille to his mother's bower,
As dew in Aprille that falleth on the flower.

He came all so stille where his mother lay,
As dew in Aprille that falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden was never none but she;
Well may such a lady Goddés mother be.

(Anonymous 13th Century)

* Makéless = spotless

** ches = chose

The Plough. However, it is worth remembering that the 13th century devotion to Our Lady knew of seven celestial joys of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven, and pictures of her as Queen of Heaven often have seven stars around her crown. In addition, in the Good Book, chapter one of the book of Revelation (v10) reads "And he had in his right hand *seven stars . . .*"

on the threshold to ward off the evil eye, OR, a sign of five medallions or marks standing for the five wounds of the Saviour which over a door were said to indicate that the house was owned by a Catholic and would be a safe refuge for a priest during penal times. This circle of the five wounds is seen in the front cover picture of this issue, which is a photograph of a small, high window in the chapel of St. Leonard at Hazlewood in Yorkshire, showing the five wounds surrounding a crown of thorns, three nails and a bleeding heart, all symbols of the Passion of Our Lord which with the Resurrection forms the heart of the faith.

6. That at Cana six large jars of water (six proud waters) were changed into wine.
7. The seven stars are usually said to be those making the constellation of the Big Dipper (part of the Great Bear) also called Charles's Wain (= farmer's wagon), and

8. That eight people were saved in the Ark. (Or perhaps that there are eight Beatitudes.)
9. The most uncertain. Perhaps the nine traditional (but unscriptural) ranks or choirs of Angels.
10. That the tablets of the Law contained Ten Commandments.
11. That after the defection of Judas, eleven apostles remained faithful.
12. That Jesus chose 12 Apostles (for the 12 Tribes of Israel i.e. the whole of God's people) to be the foundation of the Church.

THREE FRENCH HENS?

I first sang *Green grow the rushes, oh!* when I was at school, now a good few years ago, and it was a total mystery. It is not sung very much now-a-days (indeed not much is sung at all now-a-days. We have lost so much!), but one song we shall hear till we are driven crazy by it in the Christmas season is *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, and what do you know but that it too is a catechetical song on the same lines as the other one. The **true love** of the song who does all the

giving is God, and the gifts are his gifts to us:

1. The Partridge is Jesus Christ, God's first gift, who gathers his own under his wings.
2. The Two Turtle Doves represent the two pigeons offered in the Temple for the gift of a first born Son (Feast of the Presentation). (Or the two Testaments of the Bible)
3. Three French Hens symbolise the gifts of the Magi, or perhaps the Trinity, or more likely the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope & Charity.
4. Four "calling birds" are the four Gospel writers.
5. Five Gold Rings are the Torah, the ancient Law in the first 5 books of the Bible.
6. Six geese alaying are the six days we labour before resting on the sabbath.
7. Seven Swans remind us of the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit (viz. Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Reverence for God).
8. Eight Maids are likely to be the 8 Beatitudes.
9. Nine Ladies are the fruits of the Holy Spirit (viz. Love, Joy, Peace,

Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Trustfulness, Gentleness, Self-control).

10. Ten Lords are the Ten Commandments.
11. Eleven Pipers are the eleven faithful Apostles.
12. Twelve drummers remind us of the 12 articles of the Apostles' Creed. Not a lot of people know that! At least, knowing it might make the endless repetition of the song we shall be subjected to over the next couple of months bearable if we realise there is a connection with the faith and its keeping in difficult times in the past.

AT THE NAME OF JESUS

Jesus is the DEW

I shall be like the dew to Israel;
like the lily will he blossom,
like the cedar of Lebanon
he will send down his roots.

Hosea 14:6

As he silently comes to us we are refreshed and renewed. Through him we are made abundantly fruitful.

JESUS SAYS: In me there is unity with all others who know me. I am in your midst. Look for signs of my presence in others who bear my name. Thank me for the ways I have worked in your life. Be glad, for my dew falls upon you.

NITTY - GRITTY

I have an important plea to pass on from the good ladies who do the spade work here in the office at Faversham.

As part of our constant search for ways to be careful with the money you so generously send to keep the Good Ship Carmelite afloat and working for the Church, we gave you the

opportunity to say (by ticking a box on the MY INTENTION leaflet) that a reply to your letter was not necessary. This seems to have caused some confusion, with some people ticking the box, but then getting

FORTHCOMING NOVENAS

To the **Infant of Prague** 25th December-2nd January
For **Reconciliation** 17th - 25th January
To **St. Jude** 12th-20th February

worried when they did not get a reply. So we have changed the system this time. On the front of the MY INTENTION leaflet (right hand side) there is a box. **If you want a reply, please tick the box.** If you don't need an acknowledgement don't tick the box. Got that? No tick, no reply. Simple. If you do want a reply, **tick the box.** Lets see if this works better than the previous idea.

THE GOOD BOOK

The second Sunday of Advent (which falls on 4th December this year) is celebrated by many Christians as Bible Sunday, when we can give thanks for all the people who have given their lives to ensure that there are Bibles available in many languages, and at prices that ordinary people can afford. Each year new ones are added to the list. Remember in your prayers all those who work to translate the Word of God so that all people can read it for themselves, and be transformed by it. And pray for yourself that the Word may continue to work in your life. Here is the wonderful collect for that Sunday from the ASB of the Church of England: *Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, help us to hear them. to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, through patience and the*

comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

The story is told of a South Sea Islander who proudly displayed his Bible to a GI during World War II. Rather disdainfully the soldier commented, "We've grown out of that sort of thing." The Islander smiled and said, "It's a good thing we haven't. If it weren't for this book, you'd have been a meal by now!" Why not take your copy off the shelf now, and read Isaiah chapter 40.

God bless you in this coming season, and may the Mother of Holy Hope cover you with the mantle of her love as we prepare to celebrate the birth of her Son. Remember us in your prayers as we remember you in ours.

Till the next time God bless you.



David J. Fox, O. Carm