



Special Bulletin
Christmas 2024
Merry Christmas From all of us

- ***Weekend Masses:** Saturdays: Mass at 4:00 p.m.
Sundays: Mass at 10:30 a.m.
- ***Weekday Masses:** Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays: No Mass.
Tuesdays and Thursdays: Mass at 12:00 Noon

***Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament:**

Every 1st Saturday & Sunday of the month after Mass.

***Confession:** Saturday: 3:00 p.m.-3:45 p.m. or any other time by appointment

***Baptism:** Please call the Pastor as soon as baby is born; at least one Godparent must be Catholic.

***Weddings:** Please make arrangements at least six months in advance before any other plans are made.

***Sick Calls & Anointing of the Sick:**

Please notify the Pastor at 304-233-1688

***Parish Council:** Lou Kourey, Susan (John) Burns, Mark McLaughlin, Liz Murad, Gary Weisner.

***Choir Members:** Lou Kourey, Robert Harris, Joe Simon, Holly Stahl.

***Bulletin Coordinator:** Thomasina Geimer

***Altar Server:** Joe Roxby

***Altar Boy:** Christopher AlKhouri

***Cedar Club:** Linda Duffy, President

***Women's Society:** Jeannette Wakim, President



***Bulletin Announcements:** Submit all Bulletin Information to Msgr. Bakhos by Noon on Tuesday every week.

Genealogy Sunday

Readings: Is 11:1-19; Rom 1:1-12 and Mt 1:1-17

Matthew Wants To Emphasize “Fourteen”

“Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations.” Matthew 1:17

Are Matthew’s three sets of 14 generations significant?

Yes, apparently so. Matthew seems to have a plan. Did Matthew just discover this numerical symmetry in Jesus’ ancestry? If so, he got it wrong. The genealogy in 1 Chronicles 1-3 contains the same 14 names from Abraham to David, but includes 18 ancestors between David and the exile.

Matthew’s third set has been miscounted. His list puts Jesus as the 13th generation from the exile. This deviates from Luke’s genealogy, which has 22 in that group (Lk 3:23-27).

Why accentuate the number 14? One theory that may explain it is gematria, which blends words with numbers. The Hebrew numerical system employs letters as numbers (similar to the Roman system, I=1, V=5, X=10, etc.). Any Hebrew word also has a numerical value, based on the sum of its letters.

Matthew most likely associated 14 with dvd, or DVD D=4 and V=6; 4+6+4=14). As vowels were not written until later, DVD was how one wrote “David.” Matthew’s emphasis on 14—14—14 would seem to be signaling loudly and clearly to his readers DAVID—DAVID—DAVID!

Old Testament prophecies that anticipated the coming of a Messiah envisioned him as a type of “new David.” David’s persona was so inextricably linked to the Messiah that his name eventually became synonymous with it (Jet 30:9; Ez 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5). By emphasizing “14,” Matthew appears to be announcing to his readers that Jesus is the “new David”—i.e., the Messiah.

Christmas Reflection

The Twelve Days of Christmas...

There is one Christmas Carol that always has baffled me. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially, the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for the young Catholics.

It has two levels of meaning, the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality, which the children could remember.

- 1- The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
- 2- Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testament.
- 3- Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.
- 4- The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- 5- The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books.
- 6- The six gees a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
- 7- Seven swans a swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.
- 8- The eight maids a milking were the eight beatitudes.
- 9- Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.
- 10- The ten lords a leaping were the ten commandments.
- 11- The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
- 12- The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed.

So, there is your history for today. We found it interesting and enlightening and now we know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol... Need more information about your faith??? Just sing a Christmas Carol!

Christmas Symbols & Customs

Christmas is the annual celebration observed in most Christian denominations commemorating the birth of Christ. The exact origin of the festival is unknown, however, scholars believe it originally derived, in part, from rites held by pre-Christian Germanic and Celtic people to celebrate the winter solstice. Often these festivities featured the lights as a means of brightening the darkness of the winter months. It has been observed as a celebration of the Nativity since the 4th century, however, Puritanic law discouraged Christmas celebrations since it incorporated several pagan Customs, and symbols such as the use of holly, mistletoe, yule logs, and wassail bowls. Christmas as it is celebrated today started during the 18th century.

The symbols and customs of Christmas used today in the U.S. come from all over the world. Together, these make the celebration of Christmas one that is unique to this country. Some of the most common symbols of Christmas in the U.S. are as follows:

Christmas Tree: evergreen trimmed with lights and other decorations is derived from the so-called Paradise Tree, from German mystery plays. Using a tree as part of Christmas began early in the 17th century in Strasbourg, France and spread to Germany, where Martin Luther is given credit for chopping down and bringing the first tree inside and putting candles on it to symbolize the starry night in Bethlehem. In 1841, Prince Albert introduced the custom to Great Britain. From there -as well as from Germany- it accompanied immigrants to the U.S.

Ornaments: have had been decorating their trees as early as the 17th century with gilded ornaments in the shapes of fruits, balls, and wafers. When the first German immigrants came to the U.S. they brought with them the tradition of decorating evergreen trees with “kugels,” or blown glass ornaments, fashioned in the shapes of balls and fruits.

Santa Claus: Dutch settlers brought to the ‘New World’ the custom of celebrating St. Nicholas’ Day on December 6, and especially St. Nicholas’ Eve, when gifts were given to children. “Sint Nikolaas,” as he is called in Dutch, is the patron saint of children. The idea that St. Nicholas comes down the chimney to leave gifts for children in their wooden shoes or stockings is also a Dutch custom. British settlers took over the tradition as part of their Christmas Eve celebration, and when they brought the custom to the U.S., Santa Claus -corrupt form of the Dutch name- became a red-garbed, jolly old man who is said to make and distribute gifts at Christmas. The image of Santa Claus riding in a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer comes from a poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” written by British poet, Dr. Clement C. Moore, in 1823. Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer, is a fairly recent symbol which was popularized in the late 40s in a song by cowboy actor, singer Gene Autry.

Poinsettia: Originally from Mexico, this flower has become a symbol of the Christmas season. Called ‘*Cuetlaxochirl*,’ the ‘flower of purity,’ the poinsettia has been around since the time of the Aztec Empire. There is a legend that drops of blood fell on the ground from the broken heart of a beautiful maiden, and where each drop fell, a poinsettia grew. During colonial times in Mexico, people noticed that it ‘bloomed’ only in December and thus began to associate it with the holiday season. It was named after Joel Poinsett (1779-1851), the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, who first introduced the flower to the United States.

Christmas, as it is celebrated in the United States today, is a result of the blending of different traditions, customs and rituals of many ethnic heritages. Only a few have been mentioned here.

Christmas Greeting from the pastor

As for the last 24 years serving here in Wheeling, I count my blessing every morning for being the unworthy servant of the best parishioners. My prayers are offered daily for each and every one of you and for your family members living and deceased. I remember those who are sick among us. I remember the benefactors and the volunteers who are making the huge difference in the life of our community. One parishioner said to me, “This is what makes the community a Christian church where everyone feels that they belong.” Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

–Monsignor Bakhos

This Weekend, Dec.21-22: Genealogy Sunday

Saturday, December 21 at 4:00 pm: Mass will be followed by Christmas Novena

- ✠ Susie Marie Fadoul (Anniversary) by husband Millet Louis & children Janet, Millet C. & Jonathan
- ✠ Lawrence Ferrera (Birthday) by Larry & Becky Ferrera
- ✠ Gene & Janice Roxby by their son Joe Roxby

Sunday, December 22 at 10:30 am: Mass will be followed by Christmas Novena

- ✠ Deceased Members of Magistrate Joe Roxby
- ✠ John Shiben by his wife Dee Shiben
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

Christmas Mass Schedule

Monday, December 23: No Mass. Pastor's day off.

Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve

4:00 p.m.: Christmas Eve Mass (no noon Mass)

- ✠ Bob Sengewalt (Anniversary) by Dave & Debbie Sengewalt
- ✠ Shirley Elias Nickerson & Deceased of the Elias Family by their loving Family
- ✠ Sylvia Long, her husband Arthur, & her son Mark by her last will

10:00 p.m.: Christmas Midnight Mass

- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family
- ✠ Gene & Janice Roxby by their son Joe Roxby
- ✠ Joe & Frances Linton & their son Mike & his wife Sue by all parishioners
- ✠ Special healing Mass for Mary George (MN) by her sister Margaret

Wednesday, December 25th: Christmas Day of Obligation

10:30 a.m.: Christmas Day Morning Mass

- ✠ Melo J. Wakim (Birthday) by Chris & Jeannette Wakim
- ✠ Janis & George Thomas (Ohio) by their last will
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

Thursday, December 26 Mass at noon: Praises to the Mother of God

- ✠ Rosella Saseen, parents Nancepe & Helen, grandparents Shikrey & Helen Saseen by her last Will
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family
- ✠ Joe & Frances Linton & their son Mike & his wife Sue by all parishioners

Friday, December 27: No Mass. Visitation of the Sick.

Next Weekend, Dec.28-29: Finding the Lord in the Temple

Saturday, December 28 at 4:00 pm:

- ✠ Gene & Janice Roxby by their son Joe Roxby
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family
- ✠ Joe & Frances Linton & their son Mike & his wife Sue by all parishioners

Sunday, December 29 at 10:30 am:

- ✠ Deceased Members of Magistrate Joe Roxby
- ✠ John Shiben by his wife Dee Shiben
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

New Year Masses Schedule

Tuesday, December 31st, 2024: New Year Eve

4:00 p.m.: New Year's Eve Mass (No Noon Mass & No Midnight Mass)

- ✠ Sylvia Long, her husband Arthur, & her son Mark by her last will
- ✠ Janis & George Thomas (Ohio) by their last will

Wednesday, January 1st, 2025: New Year's Day (Day of Obligation)

10:30 a.m.: New Year's Day Mass

✠ Deceased Members of Magistrate Joe Roxby

✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

✠ Joe & Frances Linton & their son Mike & his wife Sue by all parishioners

Christmas Poinsettias in Memory of:

Please donate toward decorating the altar with poinsettias during Christmas. Every poinsettia cost \$25.00

- ✠ Louis N. & Louis H. Khourey, Sr. & Gladys Howard by Lou & Charlotte Khourey & Family
- ✠ Tom & Mary K. Ferris by Denise Ferris
- ✠ In Honor of the Blessed Mother by Denise Ferris
- ✠ In Honor of the Blessed Mother by Dr. Nabil AlKhouri & Family
- ✠ In Honor of the Blessed Mother by Larry & Lillian Siebieda
- ✠ In Honor of the Blessed Mother by Michael Duymich
- ✠ In Memory of Beloved parents John & Cecilia John by Susan (John) Burns
- ✠ In Memory of Danny & Milly Manners by their daughter NiNi Miller
- ✠ In Memory of David Frey by his loving Family
- ✠ In Memory of Nimon & Mariam Joseph Family by the Joseph & Weisner Families
- ✠ In Memory of the Murad & Tatalovich Families by Jay & Liz Murad
- ✠ In Memory of Shirley Elias Nickerson & Deceased members of the Elias Family by Tammy Strong
- ✠ In Memory of Bob Sengewalt by Dave & Debbie Sengewalt & Family
- ✠ In Honor of Joe & Nikki Popovich
- ✠ In Memory of the Elias & Selma Joseph Family by Mark & Barb McLaughlin
- ✠ In Memory of the Sara (Joseph) McLaughlin & Mary & John Miller Families by Mark & Barb McLaughlin
- ✠ In Memory of Philip Geimer & Deceased family members of Thomasina Geimer
- ✠ In Memory of the Shutler & Nolte Families by Janet Shutler
- ✠ In Honor of the Duymich Family
- ✠ In Memory of the Saseen & Harasuik Families by George & Susan Saseen & Family
- ✠ In Memory of Myron & Cyntia Law by their daughter Mary & Family
- ✠ In Memory of Abdoo & Dorothy Saseen & *Bernard & Marie Connell by Jim & Pat Saseen-Connell

Birthdays Wishes in the Coming Month

December 22: Millet C. Fadoul

December 25: Shelly Hancher

December 27: Luke Lenz, Jay Murad

January 1: Nancy Joseph

January 3: Kenzie Shia-Gray

January 6: Gina Stees

January 7: Jacob Fadoul Wilson

January 10: Marjorie John, Mary Petros-Hill

January 11: Jennifer Klein

Your Church Support Last Week

\$886.00	Sunday Collection
26.00	Candles
211.00	Dinner
100.00	Donation to the church
\$1223.00	Total Deposits: May God reward you abundantly for supporting your spiritual home! Finance Committee: Lou Khourey, Susan Burns, Liz Murad, Mark McLaughlin

Please Pray for Those on Our Prayer List

(Note: Please call Msgr. Bakhos if you need your name added to our Prayer List. HIPPA regulations)
 Monroe DeLuca, Sally Sengewalt, Mary Zigler (sister of Lillian Siebieda), Dolores Oser, Anthony Wakim, Earl Duffy, Fran Saseen, Sandra DeMuth, Justin Frenn, Elia Frenn, Patty Fahey, Patty Olinsky, Julia Schiess (daughter of Leo Bleifus), Fred Schweizer (brother of our organist Mary Lee Porter), Danny Albaugh, Rita Rae Sage,

What's New?

Lower Your 2024 Income Tax Bill (December 31)

One way to lower your income tax bill for this year is to make charitable contributions, which can be deducted from your income if you are planning to itemize your deductions when you file your 2024 income tax. Gifts you make to charities, such as **Our Lady of Lebanon Church**, are tax deductible. But in order for you to claim the deduction on your tax return for **2024**, you must make the gift this year. That is important to keep in mind if you are planning on making a year-end gift. For example, if you are going to give money using a check, be sure the date on the check is on or before December 31st, 2024. Also, be sure to give the check to the church on or before that date. If your gift is **\$250** or more, and you plan to claim the gift as a deduction on your tax return, the IRS requires that you have a letter or receipt from the church that received the gift.

By the end of January **2025** all donors -who donated \$250 or more- will receive a statement from **the Church** stating their names and the amount of gift received -through checks or weekly offering envelopes- from **January 1st, 2024 until December 31st, 2024**. It is wise to keep the church statement with your tax records, in case the IRS questions your itemized deductions.

Rummage Sale Items Drop off (all Year Long)

Please bring with you to the church all the items you wish to donate toward the Rummage Sale. Items are accepted all year long. The Cedar Club and the Women Society raise funds to cover the Building Insurance of our church which exceeds \$22,000. Any donation is accepted and helpful. We will open the basement door for you anytime. Please call 304-233-1688

Maronite National Youth Conference (June 23-28, 2025)

Where: La Roche University, Pittsburgh

Age groups: 12-18 year old

Registration starts on: January 17, 2025

Information: www.maroniteyouth.org! Questions: office@maroniteyouth.org

Spirituality: Christmas Invitation

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

GUEST OF HONOR: Jesus Christ

DATE: Every day. Traditionally, December 25, but He's always around, so the date is flexible.

TIME: Whenever you're ready. Please don't be too late though, or you'll miss out on all the fun.

PLACE: In your heart. He'll meet you there - you'll hear Him knock.

ATTIRE: Come as you are. Grubbies are okay as He'll be washing our clothes anyway. He said something about new white robes and crowns for every one who stays till the last.

TICKETS: Admission is free. He's already paid for everyone. He says you wouldn't have been able to afford it - it's cost Him everything He had!

REFRESHMENTS: New wine, bread and a far-out drink He calls "living water." This will be followed by a supper, that promises to be out of this world!

GIFT SUGGESTIONS: Your heart. He's one of those people who already has everything else. (He's very generous in return though - just wait until you see what He has for you!)

ENTERTAINMENT: Joy, Peace, Truth, Light, Life, Love, Real Happiness, Communion with God,

Forgiveness, Miracles, Healing, Power, Eternity in Paradise...and much more! (All 'G' rated so bring your family and friends)

RSVP: Very Important! He must know ahead, so He can reserve a spot for you at the table. Also, he's keeping a list of His friends for future reference. He calls it the "Lamb's Book of Life."

PARTY GIVEN BY: His Kids. That's us! Hope To See You There! Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear (linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints) Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! (Revelation 19:7-9)

Christmas Reflection: Madjedorie Message

Message of December 25, 2004

“Dear children! With great joy, also today I carry my Son Jesus in my arms to you; He blesses you and calls you to peace. Pray, little children, and be courageous witnesses of Good News in every situation. Only in this way will God bless you and give you everything you ask of Him in faith. I am with you as long as the Almighty permits me. I intercede for each of you with great love. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

Annual Apparition to Jakov on December 25th 2004

At the last daily apparition to Jakov Colo on September 12th, 1998, Our Lady told him he would continue to have one apparition every year on Christmas Day. This year's apparition began at 2:30 pm and lasted 7 minutes. Our Lady gave the following message:

“Dear children! Today, on a day of grace, with little Jesus in my arms, in a special way I call you to open your hearts and to start to pray. Little children, ask Jesus to be born in each of your hearts and to begin to rule in your lives. Pray to Him for the grace to be able to recognize Him always and in every person. Little children, ask Jesus for love, because only with God's love can you love God and all people. I carry you all in my heart and give you my Motherly blessing.”

Christmas Reflections: The Beautiful Hands of a Priest

We need them in life's early morning, we need them again at its close.

We feel their warm clasp of true friendship, we seek them when tasting life's woes.

At the altar each day we behold them, and the hands of a king on his throne;

Are not equal to them in their greatness, their dignity stands alone.

And when tempted and wander, to pathways of shame and sin;

It's the hand of a priest will absolve us, not once, but again and again.

And when we are taking life's partner, other hands may prepare us a feast;

But the hands that will bless and unite us, is the beautiful hand of a priest.

God bless them and keep them all holy, for the Host which their fingers caress;

When can a poor sinner do better, than to ask Him to guide you and bless?

When the hour of death comes upon us, may our courage and strength be increased;

By seeing raised over us in blessing, the beautiful hands of a priest!

Wisdom: Friends

There is no greater blessing than an understanding friend,

One who's there in times of trouble and on whom we can depend,

Who shares the happy moments and brightens cloudy days,

One who's slow to criticize and quick to offer praise.

There is no greater blessing than a friend who's loyal and true,

The very special kind of friend that I have found in you.

Story

The Night Before Christmas

It was the night before Christmas and I was very sad because my family life had been severely disrupted and I was sure that Christmas would never come. There was none of the usual joy and anticipation that I always felt during the Christmas season. I was eight years old but in the past few months I had grown a great deal.

Before this year, I thought Christmas in my village came with many things. Christmas had always been for me one of the joyous religious festivals. It was the time for beautiful Christmas music on the streets, on radio, television, and every where. Christmas had always been a religious celebration and the church started preparing way back in November. We really felt that we were preparing for the birth of the baby Jesus.

Christmas was the time when relatives and friends visited each other so there were always people traveling and visiting with great joy from all the different tribes. I always thought that was all Christmas was. Oh, how I wished I had some of the traditional food consumed at the Christmas Eve dinner and the Christmas Day dinner, I knew I could not taste the rice, chicken, goat, lamb, and fruits of various kinds. The houses were always decorated with beautiful paper ornaments. The children and all the young people loved to make and decorate their homes and schools with colorful crepe paper.

All of us looked forward to the Christmas Eve Service at our church. After the service there would be a joyous procession through the streets. Everyone would be in a gala mood with local musicians in a Mardi Gras mood. Then on Christmas Day we all went back to church to read the scriptures and sing carols to remind us of the meaning of the blessed birth of the baby Jesus. We always thought that these were the things that meant Christmas.

After the Christmas service young people received gifts of special chocolate, special cookies, and special crackers. Young people were told that the gifts come from Father Christmas, and this always meant Christmas for us. They also received new clothes and perhaps new pairs of shoes. Meanwhile throughout the celebration, everyone was greeted with the special greeting word, "Afishapa" meaning Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Oh how I wish that those memories were real tonight in order to bring us Christmas. However, this Christmas Eve things were different and I knew Christmas would never come. Every one was sad and desperate because of what happened last April when the so-called Army of Liberation attacked our village and took all the young boys and girls away. Families were separated and some were murdered. We were forced to march and work for many miles without food. We were often hungry and we were given very little food. There was very little food. The soldiers burned everything in our village and during our forced march we lost all sense of time and place.

Miraculously we were able to get away from the soldiers during one rainy night. After several weeks in the tropical forest we made our way back to our burned out village. Most of us were sick, exhausted, and depressed. Most of the members of our families were no where to be found. We had no idea what day or time it was.

This was the situation until my sick grandmother noticed the reddish and yellow flower we call, "Fire on the Mountain," blooming in the middle of the marketplace where the tree had stood for generations and had bloomed for generations at Christmas time. For some reason it had survived the fire that had engulfed the marketplace. I remembered how the nectar from this beautiful flower had always attracted insects making them drowsy enough to fall to the ground to become food for crows and lizards. We were surprised that the fire the soldiers started to burn the marketplace and the village did not destroy the "Fire on the Mountain" tree. What a miracle it was.

Grandmother told us that it was almost Christmas because the flower was blooming. As far as she could remember this only occurred at Christmas time. My spirits were lifted perhaps for a few minutes as I saw the flower. Soon I became sad again. How could Christmas come without my parents and my village?

How could this be Christmas time when we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, because since April we have not known any peace, only war and suffering. How could we celebrate as grandmother instructed us to do before she died. Those were the last words she spoke before she died last night.

As I continued to think about past joyous Christmases and the present suffering, we heard the horn of a car and not just one horn but several cars approaching our village. At first we thought they were cars full of

men with machine guns so we hid in the forest. To our surprise they were not and they did not have guns. They were just ordinary travelers. It seemed the bridge over the river near our village had been destroyed last April as the soldiers left our village. Since it was almost dusk and there were rumors that there were land mines on the roads, they did not want to take any chances. Their detour had led them straight to our village.

When they saw us they were shocked and horrified at the suffering and the devastation all around us. Many of these travelers began to cry. They confirmed that tonight was really Christmas Eve. All of them were on their way to their villages to celebrate Christmas with family and friends. Now circumstances had brought them to our village at this time on this night before Christmas. They shared the little food they had with us. They even helped us to build a fire in the center of the marketplace to keep us warm.

In the middle of all this, my sister became ill and could not stand up. A short time after we returned to our village my grandmother told me that my oldest sister was expecting a baby. My sister had been in a state of shock and speechless since we all escaped from the soldiers.

I was so afraid for my sister because we did not have any medical supplies and we were not near a hospital. Some of the travelers and the villagers removed their shirts and clothes to make a bed for my sister to lie near the fire we had made. On that fateful night my sister gave birth to a beautiful baby boy.

This called for a celebration, war or no war, Africans have to dance and we celebrated until the rooster crowed at 6 a.m. We sang Christmas songs. Every one sang in his or her own language. For the first time all the pain and agony of the past few months escaped.

When morning finally came my sister was asked, "What are you going to name the baby?" Would you believe for the first time since our village was burned and all the young girls and boys were taken away, she spoke. She said, "His name is Gye Nyame, which means except God I fear none."

And so we celebrated Christmas that night. Christmas really did come to our village that night, but it did not come in the cars or with the travelers. It came in the birth of my nephew in the midst of our suffering. We saw hope in what this little child could do. This birth turned out to be the universal story of how bad things turned into universal hope, the hope we found in the Baby Jesus. A miracle occurred that night before Christmas and all of a sudden I knew we were not alone any more. Now I knew there was hope and I had learned that Christmas comes in spite of all circumstances. Christmas is always within us all. Christmas came even to our village that night.

Christmas Jokes

- Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man.
- Christmas card from a mortgage lender: "Merry Christmas from our house to our house."
- I don't want to say that Christmas trees are expensive, but I bought one for 25 dollars. My wife is wearing it for a corsage.
- Some people call running a marathon good exercise. Others call it Christmas shopping.
- Jingle bells/Spending swells/Charge cards all the way. Oh, what fun/ it is to shop - Until you have to pay.
- "For Christmas," a woman remarked to her friend, "I was visited by a jolly, bearded fellow with a big bag over his shoulder. It was my son coming home from college with his laundry."
- There's nothing like the Christmas season to put a little bounce in your checkbook.
- During a Christmas play: "Not a preacher was stirring, not even a mouse."
- First it's December with Ho! Ho! Ho! Then it's January with Owe! Owe! Owe!
- Did you hear about the department store that had two Santas? One was an express line for kids who asked for nine toys or less.
- A man goes through four stages:
 - 1-First, he believes in Santa.
 - 2-Later, he doesn't believe in Santa.
 - 3-Then, he is Santa.
 - 4-Finally, he looks like Santa.