

# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

South Africa

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Dear Friends,

Christmas Greetings! Yes, we can still wish each other a very Merry Christmas! You know that Christmas lasts for 12 days after Christmas? In English, there is even a famous Christmas carol called *The Twelve Days of Christmas* (see text on following page).

And here is the origin and the meaning of that song:

*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 young Catholics. It has **two levels of meaning**: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of the Church. **Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality** which the children could remember.*

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



Interesting to know that many Christians – and Catholic Christians – have had to suffer and fight to preserve their faith and keep it alive and active. At this time of Christmas, let us remember the many martyrs in Africa who died for their love of Jesus Christ instead of denying their faith. We think about the Martyrs of Uganda, Saint Bakhita of the Sudan, Saint Anuarite and Saint Isidore Bakanja (both of DR Congo) and closer to us – although not yet officially a saint – Benedict Daswa of Tzaneen Diocese who, in 1990, was killed because he refused to take part in witchcraft rituals. You may ask why talk about this during this time of joy of the Christmas Season... Well, look at the liturgy of the Church: the day after Christmas, we already celebrate a martyr: St. Stephen, the first to shed his blood for the love of Jesus. There is also another Christmas carol which says: “*A tiny babe laying in a manger, destined for the cross*”

This is also what being a missionary can comprehend: to be ready to sacrifice our own life for this New Born Jesus-Christ. Many Missionaries have given their lives totally for Jesus, even to the extent of martyrdom. Are you ready for this? Ask our loving Lord to inspire you the courage and the energy to follow Him faithfully wherever He invites you to go!



A tiny babe laying in a manger,  
destined for the cross

Wishing you a very Blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with God's gift of discernment for your vocation.

***HAPPY CHRISTMAS! BLESSED NEW YEAR!***

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## Twelve days of Christmas

1. On the **first** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
A partridge in a pear tree.
2. On the **second** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
3. On the **third** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
4. On the **fourth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
5. On the **fifth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
6. On the **sixth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
7. On the **seventh** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
8. On the **eighth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,
9. On the **ninth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
10. On the **tenth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
11. On the **eleventh** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.
12. On the **twelfth** day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Twelve drummers drumming,  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree!