

MIDNIGHT MASS IS FEATURE OF CHRISTMAS IN BELGIUM; MANGERS IN ALL CHURCHES

By REV. ANTHONY COPPENS

(Written for N. C. W. C. Christmas Supplement)

While it must be confessed that old customs are slowly disappearing in the face of modern developments and expansion, still the country folk of Belgium, in their observance of Christmas, adhere to practices, many of which go back to the Middle Ages, when the Mystery Plays were at the height of their popularity and influence.

Christmas Day in Belgium is not particularly a day for the exchange of presents, as it is in the United States. Nor is the Christmas tree much in evidence at this time, as it is in the United States.

The exchange of presents in Belgium is deferred until New Year's Day. Formerly it was more or less confined to the family circle, and even now, when it has extended more or less generally to include other relatives and friends, it remains a great day for god-children, who will never miss a visit to their god-parents at this time.

The universal practice of visiting the mangers set up in the various churches of the towns and villages, often results in people returning to the proper practice of their faith.

Parents who have grown lax in the practice of their religion, and there are many cases of this kind in industrial centers, will visit the mangers in many instances just to show them to their little ones.

The Night of Christmas Eve

A CHRISTMAS STORY

(Written for N. C. W. C. Christmas Supplement)

No one in the valley had ever known such a bad season. Frost and snow and frost for the whole of Advent and the week before Christmas had been distinguished by a howling, pitiless, never-ending snow-storm. Even the old people remembered nothing like it.

Miccal O'Connor's little house was perched on the side of the hill overlooking the upper road. More and more anxious were the glances

Pagan Effort To Hide Saviour's Birthplace Proof of Authenticity

It is a striking fact that the efforts of a Roman Emperor to desecrate the place where Our Lord was born have furnished one of the strongest proofs that this spot was held in veneration by the faithful from earliest times.

The Emperor, says St. Jerome, endeavored to wipe out the remembrance of Christ's birth by defiling the grotto by the worship of false gods, as he did also Calvary and the Holy Sepulcher. "Our Bethlehem" (the manger) writes the great Doctor, "the most august spot in the universe, was overshadowed by a wood consecrated to Thamus—that is to say, to Adonis—and in the grotto which had heard the tender wailings of the infant Christ men besought the 'beloved of Venus.'"

Candle in Window

The animals had been fed and watered before Miccal and Kate sat down to a late tea on the wooden settle characteristic of Kerry houses some time ago. Minor occupations kept them busy until it was time for the Rosary. A stout candle had to be fixed in the window and there lit.

Bethlehem Is Still Abode of Shepherds

Bethlehem is still the abode of shepherds, and their rough and distinctive dress marks them out from other inhabitants. Incidentally, the staffs carried by these shepherds are used to help them up steep slopes and over rough spots in the grazing lands.

Christmas Day Nineteen Hundred Thirty-Three Years Ago



At the Crib

—From a painting by Martha Froustenin.

By KENTON KILMER

(Written for N. C. W. C. Christmas Supplement)

His tiny, wax-pink fingers Like young vine tendrils curled, There lies the Vine whose vintage Will bring life to the world.

His eyes, bright sparkling, radiant, Give promise of the light Of heavenly truth, triumphant Over the dark of night.

His soft light hair will darken To brown-gold of ripe grain, His flesh, at time of harvest Will give us life again.

His warm red mouth will open To speak the word of love, He lies there, smiling, silent, As Mary bends above.

St. Francis Was First Midnight Mass Deacon

Not only is St. Francis of Assisi credited with having inaugurated the first Christmas Crib, but he is also held to have been the deacon at the first Midnight Mass.

Reform must be slow in a world where none will listen to preaching except those who don't need it.

TRAVELERS TO ORIENT MAY LOSE CHRISTMAS; 2-IN-ROW EAST BOUND

If you arrive at the International date line in the Pacific Ocean on what would normally be December 25, it all depends upon your direction whether you have two Christmas Days, or none at all.

Passengers on steamers that cross the date line while headed toward the Orient are deprived of December 25 altogether, their calendars jump from December 24 to December 26 automatically.

But, if passengers are crossing the line while heading toward the Pacific Coast of the United States, they are in a favored position and have two Christmas Days.

As the Infant Savior stretches out His Little Hands to you from the Crib, and you wonder what gift you can best place in them, listen awhile in the silence of the Holy Night.

EPHAPHANY CHILDREN'S DAY

The great day for children in Spain is the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, or "The Day of the Kings" as they call it. For days beforehand the children are in state of great excitement, and before they go to bed put their shoes (not their stockings) outside on the balcony, so that they will be of easy access as the "Kings" pass round the town distributing their treasures.

POPULATION OF BETHLEHEM

The present population of Bethlehem is estimated to be less than 10,000 persons, virtually all of whom are Christians.

SANTA CLAUS IS UNKNOWN IN GERMANY

Quiet Holiday Customs Dating Back Generations Observed There

By DR. MAX J. SCHMIDT (Written for N. C. W. C. Christmas Supplement)

There is no Santa Claus in Germany. The Christmas customs are not even widely known. True there is a St. Nicholas, but since the Reformation he has rather been pushed into the background, as far as popular imagination goes. St. Nicholas is not Santa Claus, not quite at least. The two seem to have differing characteristics in spite of their names being so closely related.

However, Christmas customs in Germany are more closely centered around the Christmas of whom Kaiser Augustus is his servant. The Christmas in Germany is not the same as the Christmas in the United States. The Christmas in Germany is the little mangers under the Christmas tree.

In spite of the materialistic excess of our times, Christmas continues to be the paramount festival of the German home. And the Christmas tree remains the outstanding national feature.

Christmas eve was quiet and without event to the lonely home of a forester. Outside the chill wind whistled through the bare branches of the trees but around a cheerful fire the forester and his family had spent a happy evening. Just as they were about to retire for the night the door opened and someone knocking was heard outside.

Masses Commemorate Saviour's 3-Paid Birth

The three Masses which were said on Christmas Eve in the cathedral of Cologne, Germany, were the first Masses said in the cathedral since the death of the Emperor.