

## *The 12 Days of Christmas*

*The 12 days are the days after Christmas leading to Epiphany.*

*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 their 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*
- \* 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.*