

Christmas 2025  
December 25, 2025  
“Old Thyme Christmas”

Christmas is celebrated in different ways around the world. In *Australia*, December 25 falls in the middle of summer, and so participants go to yuletide beach parties, where Santa appears on a boat and passes out candy; Christmas family dinners in *Portugal* leave an empty spot at the dinner table to remember the souls of the faithful departed; in *Japan*, where Christmas is not a religious holiday, folks gather at Kentucky Fried Chicken establishments, where Colonel Sanders, dressed as Santa, greets customers, who eat festively decorated dinners; and Christmas trees in *Ukraine* feature spider webs as decorations to commemorate a miracle gift given by some spiders to one poor family years ago.

There are countless other Christmas customs. In the Midwest, one particular town celebrated Christmas with carriage rides, fireworks, tree displays, kids’ games, and smores provided by the local fire station.

Three particular elements of that town’s celebration highlight important features of the Christmas message: (1) a special woman, (2) livestock, and (3) a night parade.

In a store window in this particular town, **a special woman** dressed as Mrs. Claus sat comfortably in a soft chair, warmly greeting little children, handing out candy, and posing for precious pictures. Her friendly greeting, “Merry Christmas,” was captured by cell phone cameras as it brightened spirits.

A special woman is at the center of Christmas. Our Blessed Mother, pregnant with the Christ-Child, came to Bethlehem with her

husband. Finding no room in the inn, they sought shelter nearby. There the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Prince of Peace, came into the world, not in a palace but in a cave; he was not wrapped in purple garments but in swaddling clothes; he did not come in glory, but at night, almost in secret. Our Lady was the first woman to behold the face of God. Her humble acceptance of God's will inspire us to do the same.

**Livestock** were part of this town's celebration. Llamas, a pony, sheep, and goats feasted on pellets provided by their owners, and distributed by children. These animals eagerly approached the little hands reaching out to feed them.

Animals, too, were part of salvation history, from the pairs of animals in Noah's ark in Genesis to the dragon in Revelation. They witnessed the birth of the Christ-Child, bearing silent witness to the miracle taking place in the little town of Bethlehem.

Every nativity scene features some animals: mostly a *cow*, representing the sacrifices of old perfected by Christ (Lk. 1:8-10); a donkey, foreshadowing the *donkey* that would bring Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Mt. 21:3-5), *sheep*, representing the flock of Christ (Lk. 2:8), and later, *camels* bringing magi adorers from the East (Mt. 2:1). Creation, wounded by Original Sin, shared in the salvation brought by Christ on that first Christmas. The pets we own, including dogs, cats, and birds, share in our Christmases too. They are members of our family, and share the love of the season, including pet presents in some cases.

The third element of the special Christmas celebration was a **night parade**, including police cruisers, fire trucks, bank vehicles, local vendors, and Santa at the end. These decoratively dressed townspeople showed off their best costumes at the end of a festive night.

A parade of sorts also formed on Christmas eve, led by shepherds who visited the Christ-Child. These poor, lowly, forgotten people were the first, after the Blessed Mother, to witness the salvation sent by God, the Word-made-Flesh. Angels from on high sang “Glory to God in the highest,” and the parade included magi from the East. All came to see, wonder, and adore the miracle of that night.

Christmas is a festival of grace and glory. You will celebrate it in different ways at home with your family. As you do so, I invite you to remember the true meaning of this day, and do what you can to brighten Christmas for those who come to your home. And remember those for whom the holidays are sad, including those suffering serious illnesses, mourning a deceased family member, or struggling to pay sky high utility, grocery, or insurance bills. Offer a prayer for light, grace, and hope in their hearts.

Jesus came to save all of us. Clothed in swaddling bands back then, he is “wrapped in swaddling clothes” of bread and wine today. May the Eucharist fill the manger of our hearts this Christmas and beyond with love, hope, and peace.

Merry Christmas, and God bless you.