

This is the last issue of the *Brunns before Christmas* and I thought it would be appropriate to look at how Christmas is celebrated around the world. So here is a brief insight on the different celebrations.

AUSTRIA:

In Austria light is a symbol of the eternal light God gave man at the birth of Christ. Three large candles are made for the holiday season. The father of the family lights the first one on Christmas Eve while the family gathers around and sings Christmas hymns.

The second candle is lit on Christmas Day, and the third on New Years Day, signifying the end of the holidays.

BRAZIL:

The beginning of the Christmas season is recognized by an open Mass held at midnight on Christmas Eve. An altar is set up in the town square where everyone gathers to sing hymns and say prayers. After this, the family goes home and has a festive supper.

DENMARK:

In Denmark there is a little man who lives in the attic and is seen by no one but the cat. This little man is the cause of a lot of mischief and tends the farm animals on Christmas Eve.

The children go up to the attic and leave a bowl of porridge and a glass of milk for the little man to have during the night. When they wake up in the morning they find the food is gone, eaten by the little man during the night.

Birds are particularly important to the Danish and every Christmas all doors are decorated with a bundle of grain coming from a sheave saved from the fall harvest.

GERMANY:

Germany has made many contributions to the Christmas celebration. Some of them include the carols "Silent Night, Holy Night" and also Kris Kringle, Christmas trees and hand carved toys.

Giving toys is very popular in Germany, the toys being excellently carved wood that capture the spirit of the dark forests of the country.

GREECE:

Christmas is the time of family reunions, parties and happiness. Mothers make their delicious fried cakes and the old people tell stories and folk legends.

One of the better legends is one about a creature that is half man and half monster who creates all kinds of mischief on the twelve days after Christmas called the Karkantzari. A priest is called upon to make him go away for another year. He carries a cross wrapped in sprigs of basil and dipped in Holy Water.

IRELAND:

Here is practiced one of the most beautiful Christmas customs of all. Candles are lit and put in all of the windows of the house and the door is left open. This sign of Irish hospitality must shine all night and can only be put out by someone with the name of Mary.

On December 26th all the young children gather together, find a wren and put it in a cage on top of a furze bush. While the bird is there they go from door to door and collect for charity.

BULGARIA:

The people of Bulgaria fast for two weeks before Christmas which is not broken until the first star is seen on Christmas Eve. Incense is burned and the people offer prayers. The parents break off a piece of the ceremonial cake which is a large round cake decorated with bird figures, a flower and a cross.

On Christmas they have a church service and then the children open their gifts that they received from Grandpa Koleda. Before breakfast the father brings in the Yule Log. Kernals of corn are placed in a stocking and others are scattered on the door step in hopes that the new year will be a happy one.

FRENCH CANADA:

The declaration of Faith by the French Canadians is similiar to that of the ancient French. The season begins with a Christmas Mass which is followed by the Revellion. There is great respect for the religious aspect of Christmas.

January 6th is the end of the holiday season with the feast of the Kings of Epiphany. Here the traditional cake, "Le Gateau des Rois", is cut.

CHINA:

Before Christmas Day there are many days of Lenton preparation which are climaxed with the people dressing in colorful outfits and parading around the streets singing Christmas Carols. At midnight a burst of fire crackers signifies the beginning of mass.

The Chinese do not have a Christmas tree but instead have a "Tree of Light" which is decorated with bright paper flowers, colored paper chains and cotten snow-flakes.

CHZECHOSLOVAKIA:

Christmas means the end of all fighting and the beginning of new friendships. The people visit all their friends and "foes" and they all forgive each other of any misunderstanding that may have come up during the year.

It is still believed among the young children that St. Nick comes from the heavens on a golden cord led by an angel dressed in white. The children go to bed early in order to be asleep so that St. Nick will leave them lots of presents.

Christmas around

by Mike Mo



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ENGLAND:

On Christmas Eve the Yule Log is brought in and each person has to sit and salute it before it is lit. This is done in order that the household will have lots of good luck in the coming year.

There are many religious ceremonies during the Christmas season. Carollers collect under the arches of the cathedrals at midnight and sing the old and much loved hymns. There are many plays enacted that are several hundred years old.

FINLAND: By noon of the day before Christmas, the Finish house is ready for Christmas after weeks of preparation. The ceiling is covered with a straw frame-work that is decorated with stars made of paper, somewhat like heaven. The floor is also covered with straw, representing the stable of the Christ Child.

Everybody in the family takes a