

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

"When it is dark, you can see the stars"
Historian Chas. Beard

Whenever we feel pessimistic concerning the future of humanity, we can remember this: That, with all his fears and failings, man has yet somehow managed to put the brightest of his festivals in the darkest part of the year. The hallow of this festival, continuing, as it has, through many thousands of years, and rising, stage by stage, from primitive frenzy to pagan jubilation and finally to the exaltation of Christian observance, gives us true cause for confidence and reassurance. When it is darkest, man celebrates the light. Perhaps this is the thought above all others that Christmas can cheer us with this year. It is the inner significance, the spiritual essence of Christmas that can mean most to us.

Some people feel shocked when they discover that Christmas stories and Christmas customs are so much older than Christianity, but they ought to feel encouraged and heartened. For it means that these stories and usages are deeply rooted—thousands of years more deeply rooted—in human experience. They have stayed quite close to the inner truth from which they draw substance; the truth that man must find his faith, not in the daylight but in the dark. If he is ever to come to the light of morning, he must carry his own light with him through the night. He must proclaim in the desert a highway when there is no way at all—not even a path or trail.

He must—and evidently he can. Here is something that right back to the beginning, farther than thought can reach, back into the primitive from which we come. Here is something that beckons to us also from the future, that belongs to the very nature of the human spirit. It kindles a light, and no matter how little a light it is, the darkness can not put it out. It says: Be not afraid, be good and be true are stronger than anything that stands against them, and sooner or, later, will prevail. The darkness is vast, truly, but across it there is a path of light—a path of moving light.

"And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not." John: 1:15.

Merry Christmas . . . and Happy New Year

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Famous People Call Yule Their Birthday

A young farmer's wife in England gave birth to a son in 1642. In 1821, a baby girl was born in the Massachusetts village of Oxford. In 1865, the wife of a militant Christian crusader gave birth to her fourth daughter. And in 1883, in Paris, an artist's model bore a baby boy.

What did these four births have in common? In each case the child was born on Christmas Day, and grew up to become a famous person. According to the Book of Knowledge, these well-known "Christmas babies" were Clara Barton, Evangeline Booth, Maurice Utrillo and Sir Isaac Newton.

Founder of Red Cross

Clara Barton, Civil War nurse, was born on Christmas Day in 1821. It was her farm thoughts of Christmas that led her, when she set off to visit her brother, a prisoner during the Civil War, to offer to take presents not only to

him but the prisoner relatives of all her Oxford, Mass., neighbors.

Subsequently, Clara Barton was instrumental in founding the American Red Cross and served as its president for many years.

In Salvation Army

Born on Christmas Day in 1865, Evangeline Booth was the fourth daughter of the Salvation Army founder, William Booth. By the age of 23, she was head of the Salvation Army in London, and in 1904 she took over operations for the entire United States.

During World War I, the Salvation Army lassies under her jurisdiction spent Christmas—as well as many other days—ministering to the needs of American doughboys in France. The word "doughboy" stems from the celebrated Salvation Army doughnut, a World War I staple.

Known for Paintings

One Christmas-born child had little cheer in his life, on

holidays or otherwise. This was the French painter, Maurice Utrillo, born on December 25, 1883.

Son of an unknown father and a mother who was a model for many of the Montmartre brush wielders of her time, young Maurice was shy and withdrawn, not only in childhood but throughout his life.

Ironically, reproductions of many of his paintings, particularly those of the sparkling white dome of the Montmartre Church of Sacre Coeur, are used by the thousands every year on Christmas cards.

He Invented Toys

Sir Isaac Newton, English physicist, mathematician, philosopher greeted his first Christmas, and his first day in Lincolnshire, England, in 1642.

Frail and sickly as a youth, he devoted many boyhood Decembers to inventing and making Christmas toys.

Tree or Torch?

Canada's list of fire tragedies is enlarged each Christmas season by a frightening number of preventable mishaps. The National Safety League of Canada claims these disasters could be avoided by a simple set of precautions.

First, the League warns, a dry Christmas tree is an invitation to disaster. In fact, a tree that becomes dry enough, if exposed to flame, will explode. Make certain, NSL says, the tree is fresh when purchased, then stand it in water and keep the water replenished. Dispose of the tree as soon as possible after the holiday.

If the tree is metallic, take great care with decorations, particularly electrical ones, for a power leak could burn or kill anyone who touched the tree. The league advises using off-tree floor or spot lighting instead of lights on a metal tree.

For all lights, warns the League, inspect the cords regularly and replace worn ones. New strings of lights should carry the Canadian Standards Association approval label. Turn lights off at night and when leaving the house even for a short time.

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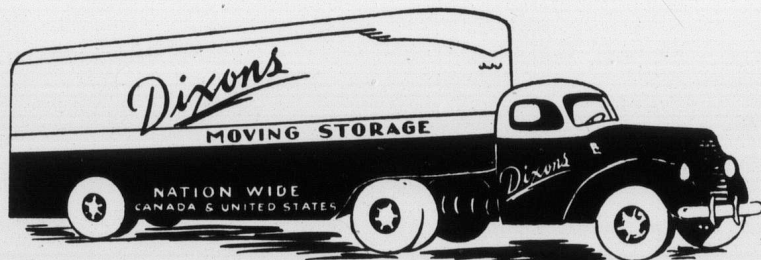
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