



A CHRISTMAS SONG

On the first day of Christmas,
MY TRUE LOVE
Gave to me
A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE.

On the second day of Christmas,
My TRUE LOVE gave to me
TWO TURTLE DOVES,
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the third day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
THREE FRENCH HENS,
Two turtle doves,
And a partridge in a pear tree.

(and so on ...)

FOUR CALLING BIRDS.

FIVE GOLD RINGS

SIX GEESE A-LAYING.

SEVEN SWANS A-SWIMMING.

EIGHT MAIDS A-MILKING.

NINE LADIES DANCING.

TEN LORDS A-LEAPING.

ELEVEN PIPERS PIPING.

TWELVE DRUMMERS DRUMMING.

According to *Summon's Christian Miscellany* this catechetical hymn was written in England in the sixteenth century as one of the "catechism songs" to help young Catholics (and not so young) to learn the tenets of their faith.

The Meaning:

First Day:

- "My true love" is God, the giver of all gifts, who in the Incarnation we celebrate at Christmas gives us the One who bears all the other gifts showered on humanity. The "me" is every baptised Christian who is showered with gifts in order to sing the song and proclaim the Generosity of God.
- Second Day: The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus and the pear tree may be a reference to the Cross.

Two turtle doves = the Old and New Testaments

Third Day: Three French hens = faith, hope, and love, the theological virtues

Fourth day: Four Calling Birds = Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists

Fifth day: Five Gold Rings = the Pentateuch, the Torah,

Sixth day: Six geese a-laying = the six days of creation

Seventh Day: Seven swans a-swimming = seven gifts of the Holy Spirit/seven sacraments

Eight day: Eight maid a-milking = the Eight Beatitudes

Ninth Day: Nine ladies dancing =

(Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστίν)

ἀγάπη, χαρὰ, εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία, χρηστότης, ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις, πραΰτης, ἐγκράτεια

This is the really clever one. The “fruit of the Spirit” is named in Galatians 5:22 : But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.** Nine in all. But why “ladies”? *Because all these nouns in Greek are feminine nouns.*

There’s a good homily in there!

Tenth Day: Ten Lords-a-leaping = the Ten commandments

Eleventh day: Eleven pipers piping = the eleven faithful disciples who piped the gospel of God to the world.

Twelfth Day: Twelve drummers drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles Creed.

Apart from the novelty and the fun that this “catechism” offers to young people during Advent as a preparation for all the Christmas presents we receive from God, it could also be sung as a recessional at Mass throughout the Christmas season. Just a suggestion!

May I wish you all a joyful Christmas, full of grace.

And thanks for your prayers.

Joseph O’Hanlon