

Some interesting facts about Christmas to get you in the spirit.

1. The word 'Christmas' comes from old English, *the Mass of Christ* or *Christ's Mass*.

Even the word 'holiday' is derived from the phrase 'Holy Day'.

2. St. Nicholas inspired the modern tradition of stocking-hanging.

There are many stories of Bishop Nicholas tossing coins through windows into the homes of people in need. Legend says that some coins bounced into the stockings a family had drying by the fireplace. This became the basis of the modern custom of hanging stockings by the mantle for Santa to fill.

3. Candy canes are shaped as shepherd's staffs, because Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Candy canes are traditional red and white striped, with the white symbolizing the purity of Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, and the red symbolizing the blood the Lamb shed for our sins. The stripes call to mind the prophecy of Isaiah *"by His stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5).

4. The use of holly at Christmas reflects the Passion

The holly bush used for wreaths is a thorny bush, which symbolizes the crown of thorns Jesus wore during His Passion. The red berries of the holly represent the drops of His blood.

5. Christmas trees symbolize God's everlasting love.

The Christmas tree is an evergreen tree to remind us of God's everlasting love. The star we traditionally place on top of the tree symbolizes the star of Bethlehem.

6. Bethlehem in English means "House of Bread"

And the Manger, Christ's first crib, was a lamb's feed box:

*"Behold the Lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the world"* (John 1:29)

So, the living Bread was delivered to the House of bread in a food dish for His sheep to eat.

7. The stable where Jesus was born was actually a cave

Because of the terrain and natural conditions of the area, the ancient peoples of Israel had primarily stone buildings, and used natural caves as much as possible.

You can still visit the cave of Christ's birth if you visit the Holy Land. It is a major Shrine and tourist attraction.