

# Heartbeats

Servants of the  
Holy Heart of Mary

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## *Holiday Favorites...*

One of my fondest memories was shopping with my father for Christmas. He saw this xylophone - with about a dozen wooden keys in bright colors - each for a different note. We looked at it and then left it there. To my surprise under the tree on Christmas was my gift of that xylophone. My additional memory is that my father played music on it more than I did. I've always loved that memory. Evelyn Varboncoeur, sscm

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My favorite Christmas carol is O Holy Night. My Dad sang in the Church Choir for 43 years and this was his solo every Christmas. #2 is: Do you Hear What I Hear? It is quite a challenge to play on the piano and I had to do it for a chorus only once.

A custom was to leave something for Santa Claus. Well, our Santa smoked cigars so he always got a

cigar. One year when the Novitiate was in Beaverville, we stayed up from midnight Mass to nearly 5:00 am. That was until Mother Rosemary, whose bedroom was below our floor, wanted to sleep so we heard a mop handle go: "boom, boom boom." Sr. Mary Stella Schellenberger, sscm

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For years I was blessed to be in parishes with beautiful Christmas music on Christmas Eve or enjoying the lovely prayers in the chapel and around the Christmas tree with Holy Heart of Mary Community in Batavia. But one year I received a call that my mother was in ICU at Gibson City hospital. I went to be with her. When I was certain that her condition was fairly

**Merry Christmas!**

★  
JOY  
LOVE  
PEACE  
BELIEVE  
CHRISTMAS



stable I went to my home parish in Melvin for the Christmas Eve mass. I was so disappointed that no one played the organ and we were alone struggling to sing a few carols a cappella. After Mass I asked some of the faithful what happened to Joyce the organist. I was told that as the head RN in ICU at the hospital she had been called in to care for a patient in emergency. I realized that my mother was that patient. I could only offer thanksgiving that the musical sacrifice that Christmas Eve was for the loving care given to Mom.

Linda Hatton, sscm

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For me, my deepest memory is Midnight Mass at home as well as after entering. Christmas always centered around that. The quiet of the night. The difference from any other time of prayer all make it special.

Myra Lambert, sscm

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Every Christmas Eve since 1970 has been spent at my in-laws house. (John's parents are long

gone, but my sister-in-law lives there still and still we go.) Christmas Eve was so important to my in-laws that one year, when I decided we would visit my family in Arizona for Christmas, we booked a flight very late on Christmas Eve, so we would not miss being with my in-laws for the breaking of Oplatki. (Only Julie and Jonathan were alive, kindergarten and pre-school age then. I had them look out the window during the airplane ride to see if they could spot Santa and the reindeer.)

My favorite tradition at my in-laws was/is that a full setting: plate, silverware, napkin is set at the table. Anyone who comes to the door-be it beggar or enemy - must be admitted, fed, and treated as one would expect to treat Christ at the door. I often stare at that empty plate hoping Christ will walk right in, and sit right down.

Judy Bumbul

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As a child (back in the 1930's) my family opened Christmas gifts before going to Midnight Mass. I received a new doll, called a TIDY DOLL (the first year in existence). You would feed it and after a

few minutes, the diaper became wet. My brother was curious and held the doll—only to get his trousers wet. He had to change to his blue jeans and was very embarrassed for his serving Mass on Christmas in them. It became the standard family joke each year.

Favorite Song: "Cantique de Noel" (Oh, Holy Night) sung in both English and French. It was sung as a solo many times over the years, starting when I was 11 years old in my home parish in Antioch and continues every year in whatever location I am in.

Favorite Movie: None, but various plays were performed by students in High School (HFA), College, University and/or parishes. I also have a book of Christmas poetry, "O HOLY NIGHT, MASTERWORK OF CHRISTMAS POETRY) which I treasure.

Christmas Tradition: Baking traditional Christmas Fruitcakes for the Community and for gifts.

Mary Kay Himens, sscm

My favorite memory and tradition at Christmas was when my father would take my brother and me up into the mountains on the ranch. He would let us choose a Christmas tree, and then he would chop it down for us, and we got to put it on the horse drawn sleigh and drag it home. Of course, we always choose the biggest tree possible!

Vicky Mobley, sscm

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Among my favorite memories is sharing Christmas Eve with my Busia (grandmother) and the whole family: my parents, aunts, uncles and cousins. This special meal is called the wigilia. Prior to the meal we looked for the first star in the sky. When it appeared, the meal would begin. Prior to taking our seats, we shared the oplatek, a wafer the consistency of altar bread. As we shared, we wished blessings to each another.

My grandmother was an amazing cook. As a young woman she had been a sous chef on the estate of a duke and duchess in Poland. The Christmas Eve meal was always meatless in those pre-

Vatican II days. I loved the vichyssoise, a potato soup that my taste buds remember to this day. Delicate white fish that flaked on the fork, and dumplings (pierogi) filled with kraut, potatoes, and cheese were served. Herring was offered as a side dish as well as a variety of tasty salads. We ended the meal with a huge "Dressel's" whip cream cake. Because my birthday was close, everyone would sing to me as I blew out the candles. These memories remain in my heart to this day.

Carol Karnitsky, sscm

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The holidays always cause me to be reflective and sentimental. I have 5 top Christmas carols: O Holy Night, Birthday of a King, Handel's Messiah, Silent night, Joy to the World. My mom would sing these in the house often.

Favorite memories:

Gathering as a community and quietly singing "Silent Night" around the Christmas tree. Watching the face of my niece when she saw her new puppy for the first time. Sitting in front of a lit

Christmas tree early in the morning before anyone is up.

Sister Mary Beth Clements

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Christmas, in general, is a Spiritual Event first of all Spiritual

People make efforts to change their lives to be more at the Image of Christ. The celebrations are prayerful, joyful and full of people.

The decorations in the Church are simple, Some Churches build a little house made by the palm leaves, or banana leaves, or grass. Everything around the nativity is simple

Just to bring out the aspect of despoil or extreme poverty Jesus ,the Son of God came to this world. The Christmas trees are simply decorated. Many people in their various families choose palm trees, banana trees, a branch of a tree as Christmas trees. Some put the real Christmas tree and they decorate them simply too. The Baby Jesus is lay down in a simple Manger, too Some Churches before the Mass, people come dancing and

singing around the Manger to adore Baby and putting money in the basket. This is just a sign of joy for the New Born Baby ,Jesus, because in Africa, birth is a Blessing. So they manifest their Joy and gratitude to God.

Christmas Eve people go to Mass, in general at 12 am and come back, rest and they go again in the morning. It is time of spiritual Refreshment.. Also, there are Baptisms and First Holy Communions.

Another aspect of Christmas celebration is Sharing one of the aspects of African values. Family gatherings, Families eat together, enjoy Christmas together, dances. Making funes...

Many families invite poor people to their table to celebrate Christmas. Time of more charity, too, to the poor.

During Christmas there are many reconciliations among people which were separated. Christmas, the Feast of the Family, Feast of Unity, Joy, peace.

For some Modern families they buy clothes, toys to their children, exchange gifts . For

the normal families, they just buy new clothes to their children as a gifts. In general The essential is based on Christ the Savoir. (Spirituality) and the family spirit. Celebrate together.

Sr. Dorothee