

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each part of the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

Four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.

Five golden rings recalled the first five books of the Old Testament.

Six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit --

Prophesy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution,
Leadership, and Mercy.

Eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace,
Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, & Self Control.

Ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.

Eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

Twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the
Apostles' Creed.