

It is a British Christmas tradition that a wish made while mixing the Christmas pudding will come true only if the ingredients are stirred in a clockwise direction

Archbishop Tache Remembers

My Christmas reminiscences in the North-West for half a century!" laughingly exclaimed His Grace, the Archbishop of St. Boniface. "I should be delighted, but I'm not much more than half a century old myself, and I have only been in the North-West thirty-eight years. You can therefore see the inconvenience it would be to give you the reminiscences of fifty years.



"But you sit down and I will reply to such questions as you may ask.

"My first Christmas in the North-West?

"Yes, it was in 1845. There were then about fifteen houses in what is the Winnipeg of today. Some of them were comfortable dwellings. The other priests here at that time, besides myself, were Father Aubert and Father Lafleche, later the Bishop of Three Rivers, Quebec. The [St. Boniface] cathedral had two stone towers, with a tin belfry. It was then in course of construction. There was nothing inside but the bare walls, and they were not even plastered.

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"We held Midnight Mass; I remembered it well. It was a beautiful, bright, clear, regular Manitoba night, with the thermometer down to 30 below. There were no stoves in the church and very few in the country. I also remembered that some seven or eight panes of glass were broken, and there was no glass in the Great Lone Land to replace them. It was indeed a bitter, biting Christmas night, but notwithstanding this the church

1BOB



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was crowded - yes, overcrowded. I think there were almost as many Protestants present as Catholics.

"A large number of those present came in sleighs. I should think there were 200 of them. Several of them were drawn by oxen. The people were very thinly clad. It was a mystery to me then, and has been ever since, how they stood the cold. I could see that they suffered a good deal during the service, as they kept moving their feet. But there was very little liquor in the country then, and people could stand the cold better.

"The Mass of that Christmas midnight was celebrated by Bishop

Provencher, with Father Aubert as assistant priest, Father Lafleche as deacon, and myself, being the youngest, as sub-deacon. There was no organ in the church, but

previous to the commencement of the service, Fathers Aubert and Lafleche entertained the congregation to a species of amateur concert on two clarinets, assisted by two half-breeds on violins. They played well, the people were delighted, and that was the first time that the music of clarinets and violins was heard in a church in the Great Lone Land.

"The Christmas carols were very sweetly sung by two Sisters of Charity - Sisters Lagrave and Gladu. Both had remarkably sweet voices. Notwithstanding the extreme cold, the open windows, and the absence of stoves, the service lasted over two hours. The exemplary behavior of the thousand people assembled evidenced their deep piety."

Hours past from this, the dear little ones below have been up and out of bed to ransack those stockings, puffed with comfits (declining, of course, the usual staple of breakfast, "just bread and butter.") They are now in the full tide of wonder and mutual display of their hordes of toys. Novices upon that noble animal, the "Rocking Horse," have ere this clasped wildly behind at his rigid tail, clutched madly in front at the flowing mane, and finally, with a yell of terror rolled from his

back to look up and see the proud creature with his glass eyes blazing at nothing, continuing his untiring gallop as cool as his "Brummagen" stirrup iron. The creaking of ungreased wheels of barrows and wagons have resounded increasingly through the house, mingling with the blended din of mouth organs, cheap accordions, drums, whistles, trumpets, watchmen's rattles and such like incentives to harmony. Flutes and violins for the youngsters, whose mothers insist "have a perfect passion for music and such an ear," have been blown into, and scraped upon, until all the

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nervous dogs and cats in the neighborhood that haven't "a passion for music" have fled distractedly from the sound, leaving the tied-up "Towsers" to howl in dolorous unison.

Five times in every five minutes, has the new watch been held to the ear and opened "to look at the wheels"; once in every ten seconds have harmless coxcombs shoved beneath their eyes that "first pair of boots" and through all their talk and running and shouts and playing, the one hand has been deployed to dive incessantly into a deep pocket and fish out for the "munchers" overhead anything to be thought of from a sugar almond to a bit of "citron" stuck in and ornamented with broken pieces of almond shell on the one side and a mashed raisin on the other. Now have the new books been rushed through for the pictures and how does the big chap decide between two little ones, who are quarrelling, as to which is Robinson Crusoe and which is man Friday.

Yes it is Christmas; it belongs to the children and sorrow lie at the door of him or her who would deprive them of their deep prerogative or darken with a word or look the sunshine in their bounding happy hearts.