

“????Christmas?”????????“Christes”?“maesse”???“?????the Mass of

Christ?"??

The Origins of Christmas

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The origins of Christmas go back to before the time of Christ when many ancient cultures celebrated the changing of the seasons. In the northern hemisphere in Europe, for example, the winter solstice, which was the shortest day of the year, occurs around Dec. 25th. During this time extreme celebration occurred and, for most part, businesses and government shutdown. It was a time of pagan celebration with various forms of sinful behavior. These celebrations were based on the day where the cold winter days became shorter and shorter. Since during winter animals were penned, people stayed indoors, crops didn't grow, etc.,--to know that winter was half over and on its way out was a time of celebration.

??12?25??????--??
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In the ancient Roman system of religion, Saturn was the god of agriculture. Each year during the summer, the god Jupiter would force Saturn out of his dominant position in the heavenly realm; and the days would begin to shorten. In the temple to Saturn in Rome, the feet of Saturn were then symbolically bound with chains until the winter solstice when the length of days began to increase. It was this winter solstice, December 25th, that was a time of celebration and exchange of gifts as the hardness of winter began to wane and the days grew longer. So, based on this celestial event, Saturnalia became a weeklong celebration that began on December 17 and ended on the 25th. In addition, December 25th coincided the day of the birth of the sun-god named Phrygia a culture in the ancient Balkans.

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In the Roman Empire, by the time of Christ, Saturnalia, winter festival, was well known and established. The Roman Church was unable to get rid of the pagan holiday. So in the early 4th Century, the Roman Catholic Church, which was the dominant church in Europe, adopted the holiday and tried to convert into a Christian celebration by declaring December 25 to be the day of the Lord's birth. They called it the Feast of the Nativity. This custom has been part of western culture ever since.

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????12?25??"????????Feast of the Nativity?"????????????????