

**Evergreen Christmas Trees:** One of the most notable Christmas symbols representing eternal life and unyielding hope is the Evergreen Christmas Tree. Evergreen Trees are known to stay green all year round. It can keep its thistles on its branches even in the winter season when all other trees lose their leaves. It reminds us of the hope that we have in Jesus that will never fail in great trials and winters of our lives. The tradition of putting up Christmas trees in our homes comes from this Christmas symbol of evergreen trees. From green Christmas trees, it evolves into colourful and decorative ornaments. The tree became a Christmas symbol during the 11<sup>th</sup> century as people regarded it as the tree of Paradise from the garden of Eden, and people decorated it with red apples. However, decades later, Martin Luther of the Lutheran Church decorated the evergreen tree with candles in honour of Christ's birth. From that year, many have followed this tradition. However, that being said, the custom of decorating a Christmas tree was actually further established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in France, Austria, and Germany.

-Bernard Kellett

**Entrance Antiphon: The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger.**

**First Reading: Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6, 12-14**

**Responsorial Psalm: 127 Response: O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways!**

**Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21**

**Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts; let the message of Christ find a home with you. Alleluia!**

**Gospel: Luke 2: 22-40**

**Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.**

**Communion Antiphon: Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.**



## **The Holy Family, Cycle B, 2023 Weekly Reflection: Christmas Symbols (2) Bells:**

Christmas symbols add festivity to the celebration and Christmas bells are traditionally part of the nativity. There are various interpretations of what the bells

as a Christmas symbol represent. First, it can be seen as the symbol of the joy and jubilation brought by the birth of our Saviour. Second, the ringing of Christmas bells symbolises the proclamation of the yuletide season. It signals the Good News that was born in the world. Lastly, this Christmas symbol signifies the love of the Shepherd to all His sheep. The ringing of bells by the shepherd signals the ushering of lost sheep back to its home. Christmas bells call us to go back to our Shepherd and celebrate his birth.

**Candy Canes:** This toothsome treat displays several important Christmas symbols. Its shape represents a shepherd's staff and shepherds care for the sheep. Jesus is referred to as the Good Shepherd in **John 10:11**. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep so they may have life and have it to the full. Jesus stepped down into the world to guide the lost sheep back to the Father. The colour red and white of the candy canes symbolize Jesus' blood and purity, referencing to his birth, life, death, and resurrection. He who is righteous died for the unrighteous. It is His blood who became the atonement for our sins. This Christmas symbol reminds us of the birth of the Sheherd who loved and saved his sheep.

**Colours Red and Green:** Different colours of Christmas symbols in the Bible have relevant meanings. For many Christians, the colour of Christmas is green and red. Green, the colour of Evergreen trees and our Christmas trees, signifies the eternal life that we have because of the sacrifice of Christ. Red, on the other hand, is the colour of holly berries which represents the blood Jesus shed for us. Holly shrub represents immortality and is the symbol of the crown of thorns worn by Christ when he was crucified as in the Christmas Carol the Holly and the Ivy.