

December is Almost Here

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There are only 12 of them. We call them months and they all have a flavor, a taste, an appearance. Some bring cold weather, some hot, and others the in-between temperatures.

Soon it will be December. It is a magical month. December is special in many ways. No amount of commercialism can ruin Christmas for me. Nothing can downgrade December. I have always enjoyed December, as a child, a young father, and as a grandfather.

December is wassail, a hot fruit drink my wife makes. It is eggnog and chocolate-covered cherries and special ornaments on the tree. It is carols. It is *It's a Wonderful Life* in black and

white and the traditional Scrooge.

December is Pearl Harbor and troops away from home and presents for prisoners' children. It is breakfast pizza made by my wife and often served by candlelight because we got up so early on Christmas morning. It is mistletoe and holly and poinsettias and wreaths. It is Clement Clarke Moore with his *Night Before Christmas* and Longfellow with *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*. It is *Silent Night*. It is the birthdays of Joel Chandler Harris, Walt Disney, Eli Whitney, Milton, Emily Dickinson and Beethoven.

It was Washington crossing the Delaware and Phi Beta Kappa being founded at the College of William and Mary. It was Valley Forge.

It is the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

It is 50 family members at a big dinner. It is Aunt Ruth, who admits she is over 80, now.

It is amazed shepherds and joyous angels and some of the best music ever written.

It is children in costumes that look much like bathrobes and towels. The serious-looking kids are gathered around something called a manger. It is candles and fragrances. It is a turkey in the oven and sweet potatoes.

December is New Year's Eve, sometimes observed with friends or at church or at home. It is high school football playoffs and early-season basketball and some children who can't seem to sleep. It is the sound of 50 youngsters on the street with their new roller skates during my childhood. It was my parents' Christmas Eve wedding anniversary. December is end and beginning.

December also brings Hanukkah. And in some places, it is winter. The calendar says winter begins on the 21st. It is thousands of lights, private and public displays. Where do they plug all of these in?

And December is our wedding anniversary. It recalls the day when we stood in Tampa with the crowd of friends and family. I was stunned by the beauty of the bride. I still remember her eyes and her warm hand. We made the vows, cut the cake, ran through a hail of rice. And then 49 years sped by.

And although it probably didn't happen during December, it is mostly about a young man and woman making a slow journey, stopping at a crowded wayside inn and finding no vacancy. It is about a birth in a cow stall and God becoming Man. The great story is told in the Bible by a man named Luke... "and the babe lying in a manger."

And Isaiah said, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given."

December, so good to see you again.