

Lyceum 126, December 24, 2025 – a forum to Think, Discuss, Share, and Learn from one another. Your input is welcomed - Iron sharpens iron.

Neighborhood “The 1826, in Connecticut, a farmer named Josiah Holbrook started a school for ‘the general diffusion of knowledge and raising the moral and intellectual taste’ of Americans. In those days, the opportunities for higher education were limited to those venerable old universities that had long served the upper crust. Holbrook’s vision was to make learning – practical, liberal, and humane – available to working people of all kinds. He named his school the Lyceum, after the garden where Aristotle once taught his students philosophy... We need to go deeper than the superficial fights that characterize public life. We need to return to the first principles and meet each other there as human beings.”– Nathan Beacom, Plough Magazine, Autumn 2023, p. 9.

Lyceums 124 and 125 were about Advent Potpourri of Ethics guidelines, principles, and applications garnished with quotations, and tickled with humorous riddles. If there is no laughter in heaven,” says Martin Luther, the reformer, “I do not want to go there.”

Now, with this Lyceum 126 we have a chance to reflect on the twelve days of Christmas from December 25 to January 4; Christmastide unfolds as a season of feasts, reflection, and joyful rituals. Each day gathers centuries of meaning, from saints to stories of celebrations. Read on to connect the familiar lyrics with a deeper rhythm of a sacred holiday season you can truly live.

Roger J. Vanden Busch.

Now, Lyceum 126 - What are the 12 days of Christmas and what do they mean?

By Ajla Brooks

Thursday, Day 1 begins on December 25, celebrating the birth of Jesus and the heart of Christian hope. You might picture candlelit services, midnight carols, and the quiet wonder of a manger scene. The partridge in a pear tree often symbolizes Christ, a solitary gift of love and shelter.

Historically, Christmastide starts here, not ends. Families gather for feasting, prayer, and gratitude, letting the joy breathe beyond one morning's wrapping paper. Even if you do not attend church, pause to savor light breaking into darkness.

Friday, Day 2 – December 26 - Feast of Saint Stephen.

December 26 honors Stephen, the first Christian martyr, remembered for courageous witness and generous service. You might know it as Boxing Day in some countries, marked by giving and charity. The song's two turtle doves echo faithfulness and the bond of covenant.

Traditionally, this day invites you to share abundance, visit those in need, and practice forgiveness after a holiday rush. Consider donating or writing a note of encouragement to someone overlooked. Let the quiet hum of compassion become part of your family rhythm.

Saturday, Day 3 – December 27 - Saint John the Evangelist.

On December 27, many churches celebrate John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple and author associated with profound love and luminous theology. Three French hens in the song are sometimes linked to faith, hope, and charity. You are invited to read a Gospel passage and rekindle love's patience.

Traditions suggest blessing wine and sharing stories of steadfast friendship. Consider reaching out to someone who has mentored you in faith or wisdom. Let this day turn knowledge into gentleness, and words into healing care.

Sunday, Day 4 – December 28 - Holy Innocents/ Feast of Holy Family.

December 28 remembers the Holy Innocents, the children killed by Herod, a sobering moment that asks for prayerful lament. Four calling birds sometimes suggest the four Gospels, speaking good news even amid grief. You might light a candle and advocate for children's safety and dignity.

Consider supporting a child protection charity or writing to local leaders about vulnerable families. Let your celebration grow tender rather than shallow. This day teaches that joy must guard the small and voiceless, turning remembrance into action.

Monday, Day 5 – December 29 – St. Thomas Becket

December 29 often honors Thomas Becket, archbishop and martyr, whose conscience clashed with royal power. Six geese a laying evokes new life and creation's unfolding rhythm. You could reflect on integrity at work and the courage to speak truth with humility.

Visit a historic cathedral virtually or locally, listening for echoes of conviction. Journal about where comfort tempts compromise and where grace invites brave mercy. Let growing eggs remind you that patience still births renewal.

Tuesday, Day 6 – December 30. On this date some calendars honor Saint Egwin, while others emphasize local customs.

Christmas week continues, unfolding like a gentle hymn. Five golden rings often point to the Torah's five books, reminding you that God's story holds creation, promise, and faithful rescue. Consider reading a favorite passage and noticing how it frames your year.

Between gatherings, walk in winter air and let gratitude steady your steps. Reach for practices that restore sleep, kindness, and curiosity. The octave invites you to carry wonder beyond a single burst of celebration.

Wednesday morning, Day 7 – December 31 – St. Sylvester.

Seven swans a swimming suggest grace in motion and the fullness of sacramental life. You might practice reconciliation with family or friends before the new year dawns.

Plan a simple meal and name what you are grateful for and what you release. Let music soften lingering tensions. Glide like swans across the waters of change, carrying calm into tomorrow.

Wednesday evening, Day 8 - December 31 brings services to many communities, keeping prayer as the year turns. Eight maids a milking recall humble provision and daily bread. You are invited to choose small, sustainable practices over grand resolutions that fade.

Light a candle, write blessings for neighbors, and pause at midnight for a whisper of thank you as New Year dawns. Consider forgiving yourself for unfinished plans and beginning simply. Grace arrives like morning milk, reliable and nourishing.

Thursday- Day 9 – January 1 - Mary, Mother of God.

January 1 honors Mary in many traditions, a day for contemplating consent and courage. Nine ladies dancing can symbolize joy that moves through the body and the year. You might bless your home's doorway and ask for peace over each room.

Share a quiet breakfast, then take a gratitude walk. Let celebration be gentle rather than loud, honoring those who need rest. The first steps of the year can feel like a slow, hopeful dance.

Friday - Day 10 – January 2 – SS. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen.

January 2 often celebrates Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, friends who sharpened each other's wisdom. Ten lords a leaping may echo authority set right by love's justice. Speak the name that steadies you when anxieties crowd your mind and let compassion guide your power.

Saturday - Day 11 – January 3 – The Most Holy Name of Jesus.

January 3 Eleven pipers piping can call doctrine sung with charity. Write a short note of encouragement using someone's name with care. Names matter, shaping dignity and belonging. The year begins honoring identities with honesty and tenderness.

Sunday - Day 12 - Epiphany and Twelfth Night.

Epiphany crowns the season as the Magi arrive, guided by a star toward generous awe. Twelve drummers drumming can echo the steady beat of apostolic witness.

As decorations come down, keep the light by practicing hospitality. Let seeking hearts and open doors become your closing carol. The journey does not end here it begins again in everyday love.

Last year, Resurrection Parish asked me to write an essay dedicated to the star of Epiphany.

May the light of the Christmas star shine upon us on this Gaudete Sunday evening – let us rejoice and be glad for Jesus says, “I am the light of the world.” If we live with Jesus daily, we not only have the light of His grace and mercy, but we become a light for others. It is not our light; it is Christ's light reflected in our lives as this evening's moon reflects the sun of our universe and the Son of God. Compared to Jesus, our might may only be a candlelight, however, it is still light that we seek to experience this evening. The world, in certain situations and places, still is in darkness because we, human beings, choose to live in the darkness of social injustices, unwilling to accept and promote, as the Gospels challenge us, that human rights are universally relative to every human being. Wherever there is still light in the world today, that light is kindled and illumined by the coming of Jesus Christ this Advent season. - rvb