



## DECEMBER 2008 NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS

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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The globe conveys wholeness, unity and perfection
- Color blue conveys intellect, peace and contemplation
- Five pointed star conveys guidance, merit and protection
- Pine trees in nature convey longevity

WATERHOUSE SYMBOLISM

### SAINT NICHOLAS OF MYRA (FOURTH CENTURY)

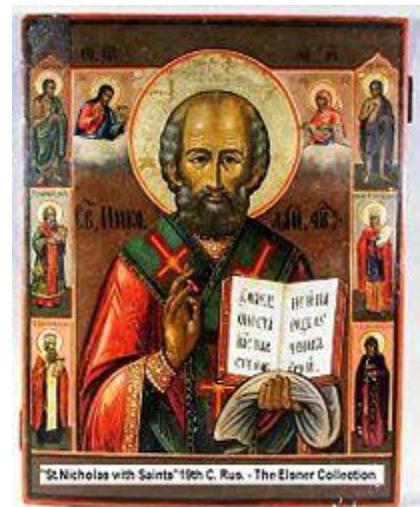
Let's continue with our exploration of Saint Nicholas who was seen in the last newsletter saving sailors and a ship.

His life, for the most part, is a mystery but we know he was the bishop of Myra (now Mugla in southwestern Turkey) during the fourth century.

He is known as a bishop of loving kindness and there are many legends associated with him. He is said to have saved three girls from prostitution by providing three gold bags for dowries, three unjustly condemned men from death and rescued three sailors from drowning (thus the image we saw last month.) In all cases, three is a symbol of the trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost.)

Many of his patronages come from these stories and the most popular are his patronage of children. In the Low Countries (Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg), he associated with giving presents to children on his feast day. This is the basis of the modern Santa Claus.

In Dutch settlements of North America, he was known as Santa Klaus and it was merged with Scandinavian folklore tales about a wizard who rewarded good children with presents.



St. Nicholas with Saints 16th C. Rus. - The Elsner Collection

### COCA-COLA SANTA CLAUS

Probably the most famous Santa Claus in the 20th Century is the one advertised by Coca-Cola.

Begun by the artist Haddon Sunblom in 1931, he was portrayed as a jolly old elf with a white beard and a red suit. Notice, in the painting to the right, Santa Claus is taking a

refreshing Coca-Cola break from the importance of making lists for the all good girls and boys throughout the world as represented by the globe below him. The globe conveys wholeness, unity, perfection, imperial dignity, the head, the world soul, travel and power. The pen or quill is the writer's attribute.



## STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Probably the most famous star is the Star of Bethlehem which led the Three Wise Men to the baby Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Joseph. The painting to the right is called *Adoration of the Magi*, by Jean Fouquet. This illumination is from *Heures d'Étienne Chevalier*. France, 15th century. The Star of Bethlehem can be seen in the top right shining down on the baby Jesus through the broken roof of the barn. As seen below, the star conveys the fire elements (earth, fire, water, air and spirit). Notice

the Wise Man on his knees, the Virgin Mary and Joseph form a pyramid which conveys firmness, strength, and eternal light. The pyramid is also connected to the abode of the dead because of the Egyptian Pyramid which was thought of as the center of the universe. In this case, it is the premonition of the death of Christ.

Notice the different colors in the painting—blue which the Virgin Mary is dressed in and the cloth that the Wise Man is kneeling on conveys intellect, peace and contempla-

tion of water, sky and primordial emptiness. The Virgin Mary is thought as the Queen of Heaven; Green is the predominant color in nature and conveys hope, regeneration, resurrection and growth of the spiritual life of a believer. White conveys joy and innocence.



## FIVE POINTED STAR WITH TRIANGLE AND CIRCLES

This particular grave marker to the right is from the German Protestant Cemetery in Waldoboro, Maine.

Stars in general are associated with the spirit; the forces of the spirit struggling against the forces of evil; destiny; immortality; guidance; and the soul.

The five pointed star is associated with many famous stars such as Star of Jacob, Star of Jesse, Star of Bethlehem, Star of Epiphany and Pentagonal Star. It conveys guidance,

merit, protection, and morning. In the Christian faith, it conveys Christ as the divine guidance.

The triangle with the apex up conveys the male principle; fire; sun; the active; the god-head; aspiring of all things towards unity; and the urge to escape from this world to see the Origin (God).

Also, the triangle is within three circles which conveys Trinity once again: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.



## STAR OF DAVID

This Star of David (symbol of Zionism) is from Greenwood Cemetery in Atlanta. Notice it is made out of barbed wire which is a reference to the horrible Holocaust.

Referring to the six points, it relates to the creation of the world in six days. When it is seen as an emblem of God the Father, the points refer to

his attributes of power, wisdom, majesty, love, mercy and justice.

The six pointed star also conveys the upper and lower worlds; God the Creator; the androgynous nature of the deity; union of the male and female principles; and the natural and supernatural.



## CHRISTMAS TREE

One of the most popular traditions of the Christmas season is buying, lighting and decorating of the Christmas tree (also called the Yule tree or the Tannenbaum which means fir tree in German.) Normally, at the top of the tree is a star or angel which conveys the birth of Jesus. The lights on a tree convey the star of Bethlehem.

The history of the Christmas tree goes back to 16th Cen-

tury Germanic traditions even though a particular town cannot be identified.

In Britain, the popularity began around 1830 when King George III's wife Queen Charlotte introduced it to the Royal Court. In 1832, Princess Victoria, when she was 13, remembers the tree and writes "After dinner...we then went into the drawing-room near the dining-room...There were two large

tables which were placed two trees hung with lights and sugar ornaments. All the presents being placed round the tree..."

The Christmas tree tradition came to the United States around 1777 and was first seen in Germanic communities.



## SAINT BONIFACE

Tradition credits Saint Boniface with the discovery of the Christmas tree. Originally Saint Boniface chopped down an oak tree in a confrontation with the old gods and local heathen tribes. A fir tree growing in the roots of the Oak was claimed by Boniface as a new symbol. "This humble tree's wood is used to build your homes: let Christ be at the centre of your households. Its leaves re-

main evergreen in the darkest days: let Christ be your constant light. Its boughs reach out to embrace and its top points to heaven: let Christ be your Comfort and Guide."

The image to the right is *St. Boniface, Baptising and Martyrdom*, from the Fulda Cathedral in Germany.

Saint Boniface lived from 672 to 754 and was a mis-

sionary who spread the word of Christ throughout the Frankish Empire in the 8th Century. He is the patron saint of Germany.

In 754, Saint Boniface and a small band of followers went to Frisia to convert the people there to Christianity. He was killed by the Frisians because he had destroyed their pagan shrines.



## PINE TREES IN THE FOREST

This painting called *Forest Interior, Winter* (CA 1911) is by the Norwegian Artist Edvard Munch who is known most famously for his work *The Scream*. In Waterhouse Symbolism Newsletter 27, I did a whole Issue on Trees.

In Munch's painting, notice the silence quality with any sound being stilled by the

majesty of the pines and the vastness of the snow.

Pine trees in nature convey longevity and immortality. Trees are symbolized in many different cultures including China. For example, the Chinese felt that longevity was one of the greatest of all human blessings.



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## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



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### S Y M B O L S   T H R O U G H O U T   T H E C E N T U R I E S

#### THE EAGLE IS WOUNDED BUT WILL SURVIVE

It seems that this area is becoming the political part of the newsletter. Rick George sent me this wonderful cartoon in honor of the most recent election of Obama. Usually, we think of the eagle in relation to the 4th July but in this cartoon he represents the battered country and the fact that Obama better be sworn in before our country gets battered anymore. In Newsletter 25, I showed the United States Seal. Normally, in his left foot he holds an olive branch which conveys peace

but since he has a broken foot he cannot hold it. Notice that in left right claw, he holds three terribly broken arrows (conveys Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.) Arrows normally convey protection.

Notice that the shield on his chest is pierced with two arrows. Also, the shield on his chest show the colors of the American flag.

#### QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

And the angel came in unto her, and said,  
Hail, though that art highly favored,  
the Lord is with thee:  
blessed art thou among women.  
Luke 1:28

It is amazing that the holiday season is amongst us. It is so true that the older you get, the faster time seems to go - it only seems like yesterday that we were celebrating Christmas 2007.

I hope you and your loved ones have a wonderful holiday season and I look forward to sending you another newsletter in 2009.

Continue looking for pictures of symbols that I can spotlight in 2009 and beyond.

Take care,  
Richard Waterhouse

