



The Origins of Christmas

Joseph F. Kelly PhD

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When was Christmas first celebrated? How did December 25 become the official date for Christmas? How did the Bible's "magi from the East" become three kings named Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar who rode camels from three different continents to worship the newborn Christ? Why did medieval and Renaissance artists often portray Joseph as an old man? When did the first Christmas music appear? And who was the real St. Nicholas, and how did he become one of the most famous of all Christian saints? These and many other questions are answered in *The Origins of Christmas*. The story of the origins of Christmas is not well known, but it is a fascinating tale. It begins when Christmas did not exist, and finishes when Christmas had become an integral part of Christian life and Western culture. *The Origins of Christmas* covers a variety of topics in a concise and accessible style and is suitable for group discussions. Chapters are "The Birth of Jesus," "Creating the Christmas Story," "Creating Christmas Day and the Christmas Season," "Jesus, Mary, the Magi, and an Obscure Asian Bishop," and "The Popular Acceptance of Christmas." Joseph F. Kelly, PhD, who chairs the religious studies department at John Carroll University, is also active in the religious education apostolate of the Diocese of Cleveland. *The World of the Early Christians* (1997), *The Problem of Evil in the Western Tradition* (2002), and *Responding to Evil* (2003), published by Liturgical Press, are among his nine previous books.

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