



Crèche

HOLY NAME CATHEDRAL – EVANGELIZATION PILLAR

MS. SHELLY CRONIN NOVEMBER 2022



What is a Crèche?

- ▶ She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.
Luke 2:7
- ▶ Crèche is defined as a manger, a trough for holding feed for livestock or to identify the manger where Jesus was laid.
- ▶ By the late 18th century, crèche became the representation of the Nativity scene.

Origin



- ▶ Saint Francis of Assisi created the first depiction of the Nativity to help the children to understand the true meaning of Christmas.
- ▶ He wanted to remind the world that the season was about more than just giving or receiving gifts, but that it was about celebrating the birth of a special baby – Jesus.
- ▶ For his midnight Christmas mass (1223), he staged a live baby Jesus in a manger, an ox, a donkey, and the scene were surrounded by hay. St. Francis of Assisi wanted to excite the parishioners and commemorate the Nativity with this live scene. He became so overcome by the emotion of the scene that he was unable to say the name Jesus, he referred to him as “the babe of Bethlehem “.

Persecution heightens crèche devotion

- ▶ The live Nativity scene spread throughout Europe and became popular in Italy with almost every Catholic Church hosting real people and animals. Eventually the tradition evolved into the scene with statues.
- ▶ During the French Revolution (1789-1799), the live scenes were banned. So people began to make the crèche in secret by using household supplies such as cloth and bread or clay.
- ▶ The small clay crèche figurines were referred to in France as Santons, meaning “Little Saints”.
- ▶ These small clay crèches have paved the way for many styles and sizes we now have today.



Neapolitan *presepio* at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh



<http://www.definingfrance.com/2016/12/04/santons-de-provence-a-french-christmas-tradition/>



<https://liveitalymag.com/the-history-of-nativity-scenes-in-italy-and-presepi/>



<https://poland.pl/experience-poland/traditions-and-holidays/krakow-creche-display-paris/>



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/puzzler4879/3092683130/in/photostream/>
Adoration of Christ Tree, St. Mark
Roman Catholic Church, Brooklyn, NY

Cultural Adaptations

- ▶ Our crèche scenes are a visible reminder of that night when our Savior was born. May we never forget to see in our hearts the little “babe of Bethlehem “, who came to save us from sin. We must never forget that the wood of the manger that held Him so securely, would one day give way to the wood of the cross he died upon.
- ▶ Other cultures may use different names or stories, but in the end, each is telling us the holiday is not just a time for gift giving, it is to focus on the time to celebrate the birth of our Savior.
- ▶ May we embrace him and the true meaning of the crèche with all our love, as did St. Francis of Assisi.



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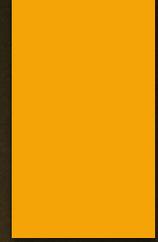


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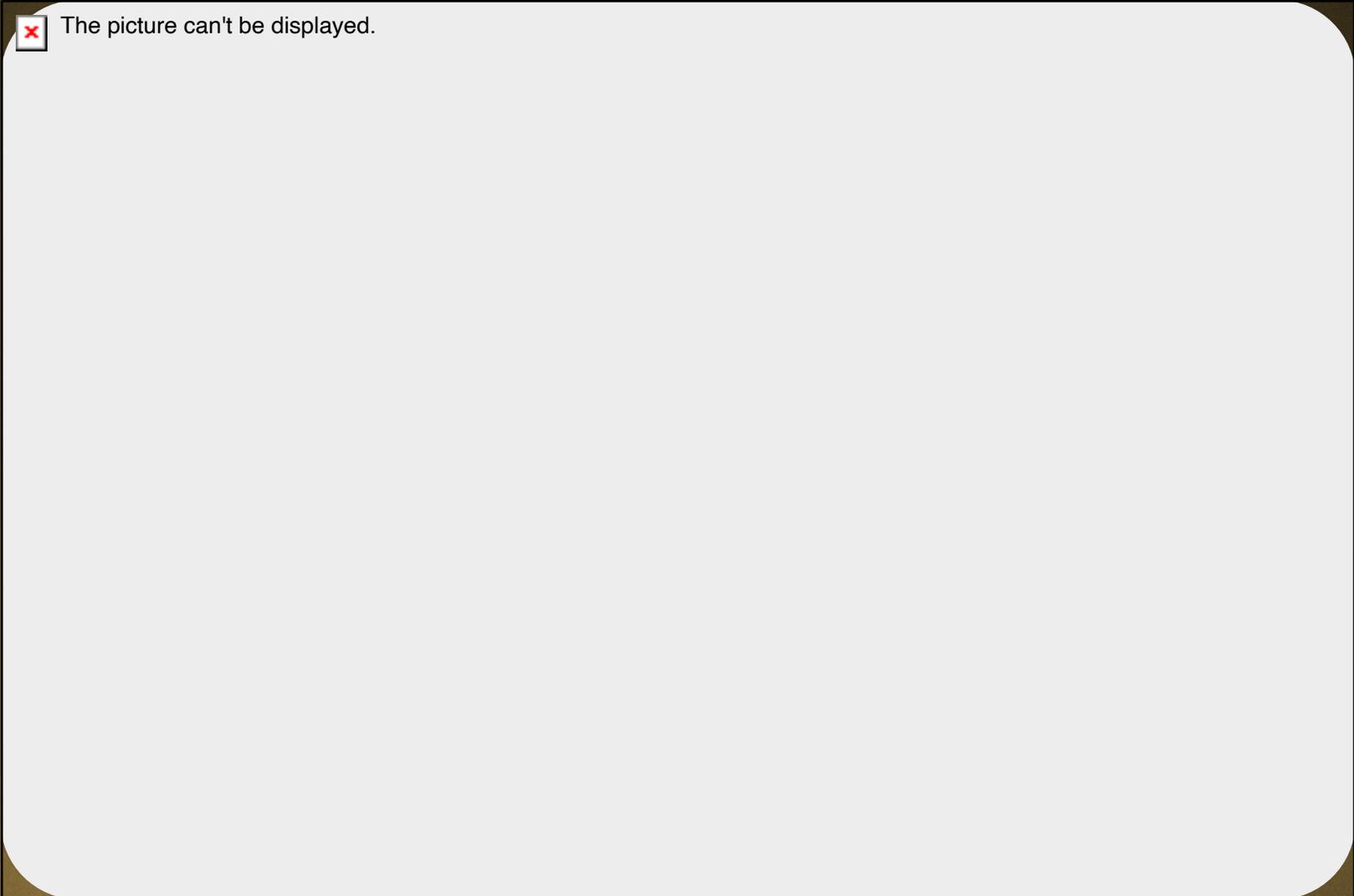
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crèche to the Holy
Name Cathedral
website.

