

# Fun facts

The Germans made the first artificial Christmas trees out of dyed goose feathers.

The "true love" mentioned in the song "Twelve Days of Christmas" does not refer to a romantic couple, but the Catholic Church's code for God. The person who receives the gifts represents someone who has accepted that code. For example, the "partridge in a pear tree" represents Christ. The "two turtledoves" represent the Old and New Testaments.

According to the Guinness world records, the tallest Christmas tree ever cut was a 221-foot Douglas fir that was displayed in 1950 at the Northgate Shopping Center in Seattle, Washington.

Christmas trees usually grow for about 15 years before they are sold.

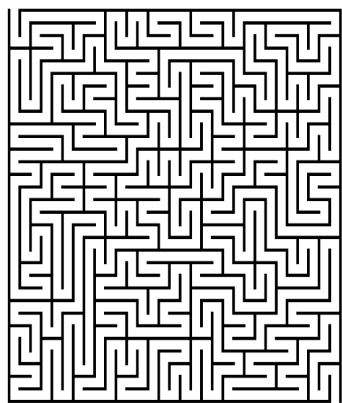
In Poland, spiders or spider webs are common Christmas trees decorations because according to legend, a spider wove a blanket for Baby Jesus. In fact, Polish people consider spiders to be symbols of goodness and prosperity at Christmas.



Because they viewed Christmas as a decadent Catholic holiday, the Puritans in America banned all Christmas celebrations from 1659-1681 with a penalty of five shillings for each offense. Some Puritan leaders condemned those who favored Christmas as enemies of the Christian religion.

In Germany, Heiligabend, or Christmas Eve, is said to be a magical time when the pure in heart can hear animals talking.

The earliest known Christmas tree decorations were apples. At Christmastime, medieval actors would use apples to decorate paradise trees (usually fir trees) during "Paradise Plays," which were plays depicting Adam and Eve's creation and fall.



## Merry Christmas!



**BIRTHDAYS & SPECIAL EVENTS IN:**

# DECEMBER

3<sup>rd</sup> – Stickle Anniversary  
4<sup>th</sup> – Nicole Marcoux  
5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Pastor in Polkowice, Poland  
8<sup>th</sup> – Stephanie Smith  
25<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Day  
26<sup>th</sup> – John Herring

# NCO Kids

## Monthly News

 December 2013 

## Richard Wurmbrand

Many people called him the "Voice of the Underground Church" and others referred to him as the "Iron Curtain St. Paul." This humble man who began the ministry of The Voice of the Martyrs was the Reverend Richard Wurmbrand. Richard's life was a partnership with Sabina, whom he married on October 26, 1936.

Richard Wurmbrand was born the youngest of four boys in a Jewish family on March 24, 1909, in Bucharest, Romania. Gifted intellectually and fluent in nine languages, Richard was active in leftist politics and worked as a stockbroker.

After their marriage, Richard and Sabina were converted to Christ in 1938, chiefly because of the influence of a German



carpenter, Christian Wölfkes. They joined the Anglican Mission to the Jews in Bucharest. Richard was

ordained, first Asan Anglican, and then after World War II as a Lutheran minister.

During World War II, Richard and Sabina saw an opportunity for evangelism among the occupying German forces. They preached in the bomb shelters and rescued Jewish children out of the ghettos. Richard and Sabina were repeatedly arrested and beaten and, at least once, nearly executed. Sabina lost her Jewish family in Nazi concentration camps.

In 1945, Romanian Communists seized power and a million "invited" Russian troops poured into the country. Pastor Wurmbrand ministered to his oppressed countrymen and engaged in bold evangelism to the Russian soldiers.

That same year, Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand attended the Congress of Cults organized by the Romanian Communist government. Many religious leaders came forward to praise Communism and to swear loyalty to the new regime. Sabina said, "Richard, stand up and wash away this shame from the face of Christ." Richard warned, "If I do so, you'll lose your husband."

"I don't wish to have a coward as a husband," she replied. Thus Richard declared to the 4,000 delegates, whose speeches were broadcast to the whole nation, that their duty is to glorify God and Christ alone.

Between 1945 and 1947, Richard distributed 1 million Gospels to Russian troops, often disguising the books as Communist propaganda. Richard also smuggled Gospels into Russia. On December 30, 1947, the People's Republic of Romania was proclaimed.

On February 29, 1948, the secret police arrested Richard while on his way to church and took him to their headquarters. He was locked in a solitary cell and labeled 'Prisoner Number 1.'

In 1950, his wife Sabina was also imprisoned. She was forced to serve as a laborer on the Danube Canal project, leaving their nine-year-old son Mihai alone and homeless. Following her release in 1953, the Romanian authorities informed her that Richard had died in prison.

A Christian doctor masquerading as a Communist Party member discovered Richard alive in prison. In a general amnesty, Richard was released in 1956, after serving eight-and-a-half years in prison. He was warned never to preach again. While in prison, he went through horrific tortures at the hands of the brutal secret police. Despite the treatments and the warnings he received from his persecutors, Richard resumed his work with the "underground" churches after his release.

He was re-arrested in 1959, through the conspiracy of an associate, and sentenced to 25 years. He was accused of preaching ideas contrary to Communist doctrine. Due to increased political pressure from Western countries, Richard was granted another amnesty and released in 1964.

In December 1965, the Norwegian Mission to the Jews and the Hebrew Christian Alliance paid \$10,000 in ransom to the Communist government to allow the Wurmbrand family to leave Romania. Reluctant to leave his homeland, Richard was convinced by other underground church

leaders to leave and become a "voice" to the world for the underground church. Richard, Sabina, and their son Mihai left Romania for Norway and then traveled on to England.

Richard began his ministry of being a voice for persecuted Christians in England with Rev. Stuart Harris, where he also wrote his testimony of persecution, *Tortured for Christ*. Later, Richard moved on to the United States, and in 1966, he appeared before a U.S. Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, where he stripped to the waist and revealed 18 deep torture wounds on his body. His story spread rapidly, leading to more and more speaking engagements.

In 1967, the Wurmbrands officially began a ministry committed to serving the persecuted church, called Jesus to the Communist World (later renamed The Voice of the Martyrs). In the same year, Richard released his book, *Tortured for Christ*.

In October, 1967, the first monthly issue of The Voice of the Martyrs newsletter was published in the U.S. By the mid-1980s, his work was established in eighty restricted nations with offices in thirty countries around the world.

In 1990, after the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu in December 1989, Richard and Sabina returned to Romania after 25 years in exile and were warmly received. A printing facility and bookstore were opened in Bucharest, and the officials of the city offered to store Christian books in a room below the palace of Ceausescu, the very site where Richard had been held in solitary confinement.

Richard retired from the day-to-day work

of The Voice of the Martyrs in 1992, but he continued as a consultant and member of the board of directors, maintaining a keen interest in the work until his death in 2001.

During his ministry, Richard wrote eighteen books in English and others in Romanian, some of which have been translated into thirty-eight different languages. His most well-known book is *Tortured for Christ*. He received numerous honors and citations during his lifetime for his work and ministry.

Richard is remembered with great affection as an outstanding man of God, passionate for the cause of Christ, powerful in evangelism, and persevering in suffering for the sake of the Jesus he loved. Sabina, who passed away August 11, 2000, is remembered as a woman of great integrity, a student of the Scriptures, a mighty faith warrior, and a true help mate to her husband.

