

How people of Meylan celebrate Christmas

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Special to The Citizen

Christmas is approaching with its cortege of traditions. The city is illuminated, the evergreens are renewing themselves, and certain ones are assured that they have seen Father Christmas. Snuggled in the warmth of the family, the people of Meylan like to celebrate Christmas. Some will find the gift of sharing themselves in this religious manifestation that has been its source for over two thousand years.

Francoise Turrier says that

every year her father goes through the same ritual, climbing the roof and cleaning the chimney so that Father Christmas goes down more easily. Her father is now 62 and lives in the same house in which he was born. It is near the old town hall.

"I remember quite vividly when I was in school we would all receive a book, a tangerine, and watch a film in the Glycines which used to be the old town hall, but which is now used as a place for parties.

Turrier remembers the family traditions, the little

Christmas tree cut by her father in the woods of Rochasson then decorated with cotton, paper bags, and lighted with candles, the scent of junipers boiled in a pot hanging in the chimney fills the house while the family arranges the Nativity scene.

"Then we go on an excursion to Grenoble to see the store windows decorated for Christmas, the new galleries, and our picture taken with Father Christmas. Later that night we all go to midnight Mass. We climb the icy streets at night to the chapel of the Capuchins with our neighbors and friends to see the crèche, a tradition inherited from St. Francis of Assisi. Until 1962, living figures composed the Nativity but now the Nativity is carved statues surrounded with foliage, an impressionable memory. During midnight mass, the infant Jesus is processed through the church and deposited in the crib. After Midnight Mass, the families meet for hot chocolate and brioche.

"On Dec. 25, Mother prepares a feast with turkey and chestnuts. Today the religious feeling is blunted a little, but the magic of Christmas remains. The city is filled with lights and garlands. The Meylanais turn to their grandparents to perpetuate the traditions. My grandfather smiles and the eyes of the young shine when they open their gifts. "Nothing much has changed, the children are spoiled much more today." In the mountains surrounding Meylan can be seen the many bonfires which are lighted Christmas Eve it is called "the fire of joy."