

**"Man, you don't mess around when you're hungry!"**

Have you heard about the little boy who loved going to Church? He enjoyed the music, the stained-glass windows, the homily, and the fellowship. The only part about going to Church that the little boy didn't like, were those long personal prayers which the pastor added to the intercessory prayers! Then on Christmas, the little boy's parents invited the pastor home for lunch... and would you believe it, his mom asked the pastor to pray the prayer of thanksgiving before the meal. "Oh, no," thought the little boy, "We will never get to eat. I am starving, and he will pray forever."

But to his surprise, the pastor's prayer was brief and to the point. He said, "O Lord, bless this home. Bless this food, and use us in your service, in Jesus Name. Amen." The little boy was so astonished by the pastor's short prayer that he couldn't help himself. He looked at the pastor and blurted out what he was thinking: "Man, you don't mess around when you're hungry!" — Well, I don't want to "mess around" on this Christmas Day because I know that whether we realize it or not... we are hungry. We are all hungry for God. We are all hungry for our Savior.

We are all hungry for Christmas... because, you see, this is precisely what Christmas is all about. We need a Savior, we are starved for a Savior, a Savior is given in Jesus, and the name "Jesus" means literally "The Lord is Salvation," or "Yahweh Saves," or "Savior." Jesus came at Christmas to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He came to save us from our sins. *Fr. Tony* (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

**Thanks for listening:**

In the Cable TV episodes ***Inside the Actor's Studio***, **James Lipton** invites celebrities - famous actors, writers and directors - to talk about their careers and how they do what they do. And he always ends each episode the same way, with one particular question: "If you believe that God exists, what do you think He will say to you when you finally see Him?" It's a good question, by the way, to ask ourselves periodically. It can make for an interesting examination of conscience. Anyway: on this episode, the person James Lipton was interviewing was **Steven Spielberg**. Lipton asked him that final question: "**What do you hope God will say to you when you finally see Him?**" And Spielberg thought for a moment and smiled. He replied: "**Thanks for listening.**" — So much of the Christmas story is, truly, about listening. When Gabriel arrives to bring **Mary** the news that she will bear a child...she listens. When the angel tells **Joseph** in his dreams what is about to happen...he listens. The **shepherds** listen when the angel announces the "good news of great joy." Two thousand years later, we confront this stunning message - "tidings of comfort and joy," as the carol describes it - and our hearts swell with the sentiment of the season. We hear. But are we paying attention? **Are we listening?** Christmas invites us to listen. ([Deacon Greg Kandra](https://frtonyshomilies.com/)). *Fr. Tony* (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

**Two babies in the manger?**

In 1994, two Christian missionaries answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics in a large orphanage. About 100 boys and girls who had

been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. It was nearing Christmas and the missionaries decided to tell them the story of Christmas. It would be the **first time these children heard the story** of the birth of Christ. They told the children about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the Baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger. Throughout the story, the children and the orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. When the story was finished, the missionaries gave the children three small pieces of **cardboard** to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from **yellow napkins** that the missionaries had brought with them since no colored paper was available. Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small **squares of flannel**, cut from a worn-out nightgown discarded by a tourist, were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from **tan felt** which the missionaries had also brought with them. It was all going smoothly until one of the missionaries sat down at a table to help a 6-year-old boy named Misha. He had finished his manger. When the missionary looked at the little boy's manger, she was startled to see not one, but **two babies in the manger**. Quickly, she called for the translator to ask Misha why there were two babies in the manger.

Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at this completed manger scene, Misha began to repeat the story very seriously. For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately until he came to the part where Mary put the Baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending. He said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him, 'I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me that I could stay with Him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give Him like the shepherds and the magi did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept Him warm, that would be a good gift. So I asked Jesus, **'If I keep You warm, will that be a good enough gift?'** And Jesus told me, **'If you keep Me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave Me.'**

So I got into the manger and then Jesus looked at me and He told me I could stay with Him - for always."

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed.

The little orphan had found Someone Who would never abandon nor abuse him, Someone who would stay with him - FOR ALWAYS. — Today we celebrate the great feast of Jesus the Emmanuel - "God with Us. Fr. Tony (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).