

Christmas - December 2023

A few days before Christmas, two young brothers were spending the night at their grandparent's house. When it was time to go to bed, anxious to do the right thing, they both knelt down to say their prayers. Suddenly, the younger one began to do so in a very loud voice. "Dear Lord, please ask Santa Claus to bring me a play-station, a mountain-bike and a telescope." His older brother leaned over and nudged his brother and said, "Why are you shouting your prayers? God isn't deaf." "I know," he replied. "But Grandma is!"

A 4-year-old boy was asked to give the blessing before Christmas dinner. The family members bowed their heads in expectation. He began his prayer, thanking God for all his friends, naming them one by one. Then he thanked God for Mommy, Daddy, brother, sister, Grandma, Grandpa, and all his aunts and uncles. Then he began to thank God for the food. He gave thanks for the turkey, the dressing, the fruit salad, the cranberry sauce, the pies, the cakes- even the Cool Whip. Then he paused, and everyone waited-and waited. After a long silence, the young fellow looked up at his mother and asked, "If I thank God for the broccoli, won't He know that I'm lying?"

"Don't go! You can have my room."

Nine-year-old Wally was in second grade when most children his age were fourth graders. He was big for his years, a clumsy fellow, a slow learner. But Wally was a hopeful, willing, smiling lad, a natural defender of the underdog, and he was well-liked by his classmates. His parents encouraged him to audition for the annual parish Christmas play. Wally wanted to be a shepherd. Instead, he was given the role of the innkeeper. The director reasoned that Wally's size would lend extra force to the innkeeper's refusal of lodging to Joseph. During rehearsals, Wally was instructed to be firm with Joseph. When the play opened, no one was more caught up in the action than Wally. And when Joseph knocked on the door of the inn, Wally was ready. He flung the door open and asked menacingly, "What do you want?" "We seek lodging," Joseph replied. "Seek it elsewhere," Wally said in a firm voice. "There's no room in the inn." "Please, good innkeeper," Joseph pleaded, "this is my wife, Mary. She is with child and is very tired. She needs a place to rest." There was a long pause as Wally looked down at Mary. The prompter whispered Wally's next line: "No! Be gone!" Wally remained silent. Then the forlorn couple turned and began to slowly move away. Seeing this, Wally's brow creased with concern. Tears welled up in his eyes. Suddenly, he called out, "Don't go! You can have my room." (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

We need to reserve a room for Jesus in our heart:

Christmas asks us a tough question. Do we close the doors of our hearts to Jesus looking for a place to be reborn in our lives? There is no point in being sentimental about the doors slammed by the folk in Bethlehem, if there is no room in our own hearts for the same Jesus coming in the form of the needy. We need to reverence each human life and to treat others respectfully as the living residences of the incarnate God. To neglect the old, to be contemptuous of the poor or to have no thought for the unemployed and the lonely is to ignore those individuals with whom Christ has so closely identified Himself. Hence, we all need to examine ourselves daily on the doors we close to Jesus.

Jesus pitched his tent among us:

The custom of placing lighted candles in the windows at Christmas was brought to America by the Irish. When religion was suppressed throughout Ireland during the persecution by the Protestant English, the people had no Churches. Priests hid in the forests and caves and secretly visited the farms and homes to say Mass there during the night. It was the dearest wish of every Irish family that at least once in their lifetime a priest would arrive at Christmas to celebrate Mass. For this grace they hoped and prayed all through the year. When Christmas came, they left their doors unlocked and placed burning candles in the windows, so that any priest who happened to be in the vicinity could be welcomed and guided to their home through the dark night. Silently the priest would enter through the unlatched door and be received by the devout inhabitants with fervent prayers of gratitude and tears of happiness that their home was to become a Church for Christmas. To justify this practice in the eyes of the English soldiers, the Irish people explained that they burned the candles and kept the doors unlocked so that Mary and Joseph, looking for a place to stay, would find their way to their home and be welcomed with open hearts. The candles in the windows have always remained a cherished practice of the Irish, although many of them have long since forgotten the earlier meaning. (*William Barker in Tarbell's Teacher's Guide; quoted by Fr. Botelho*). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).