

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)  
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Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church  
Sammamish, Washington  
25 December 2021

Isaiah 9:1-6  
Psalm 96  
Titus 2:11-14  
(Luke 2:10-11) Luke 2:1-14

*Christmas: Jesus Is Our Ticket for Heaven*

Christmastime is a time of traveling. Colleges and schools are on break. People take time vacation time from work. It's a time for traveling back home to visit family and old friends. It's a time for taking a family vacation. It's a time for hosting guests, as well. Many of you have traveled to be here tonight, or are preparing to travel soon. Are there any travelers here with us tonight? Welcome to Mary, Queen of Peace! We are glad that you made it safely to be with us here on this Holy Night, and hope that you enjoy your visit.

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I have good memories of traveling for Christmas as a child. Some years, we'd have a local Christmas, and spend it traveling nearby to be with my family at my grandparents' house. Other years, we'd fly to California to visit our grandparents on the other side of the family tree.

One particular year—sometime in the late 1980s—as we were packing the night before flying to California, we realized that we couldn't find the airplane tickets. It's funny to think back and remember a time when the ticket was, well, *THE* ticket. It was how you got on the airplane and, without it, you couldn't get on. There wasn't such a thing as e-tickets back then that you could easily re-print.

We looked for the tickets late into the night. And continued to look in the morning. We finally decided to head to the airport—several hours before the flight—to see if there would be any way for them to reissue the tickets. I was just a kid, so I don't know the details, other than we couldn't get the tickets reissued. It seemed like Christmas was going to be ruined.

We went back home without much hope but, when we got home, looked one more time and—thanks be to God—found the tickets! Even more thankfully, we still had time to make it back to the airport for our flight. It was a Christmas miracle and Christmas that year was saved!

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Traveling can be very exciting—it's part of what makes this season special and joyful. It's also what can make this season stressful—especially if things don't go as planned. We see this notion of traveling or being home for Christmas in popular Christmas songs, TV shows, and movies, as well as the unexpected stressful side of it in beloved Christmas movies like *Home Alone*. There's just something about traveling, being home, and some kind of miracle that resonates with Christmas.

The Sacred Scriptures around Christmastime also present us with the theme of travel:

- The Angel Gabriel traveled from God to Nazareth to visit the Virgin Mary.<sup>1</sup>
- After saying “yes” to God's plan for her to become the Mother of His Son, Mary traveled to visit her cousin, Elizabeth.<sup>2</sup>
- As we heard in tonight's Gospel, not too long before Jesus' Birth, Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem to be enrolled in the emperor's census.<sup>3</sup>
- The Angel of the Lord traveled from Heaven to announce Jesus' Birth to the shepherds in the fields, who then traveled to meet the newborn Savior lying in the manger.<sup>4</sup>
- The magi traveled hundreds of miles from the East to pay homage and bring gifts to the Newborn King.<sup>5</sup>

These accounts from Sacred Scripture reveal that travel has been a part of the Christmas story from the beginning.

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About a year ago I was introduced to the writings of Corrie ten Boom, and I've shared her faith and her wisdom in homilies a few times since then. Corrie and her family hid Jewish people in their home during the Nazi occupation of Holland during World War II. All her family were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Corrie was the only one of her family to survive,

and, after the war, fulfilled the promise she made to her sister, Betsie, that she would tell people what they had learned in the concentration camp: "...that joy runs deeper than despair."<sup>6</sup> And, "...that there is no pit so deep that [Jesus] is not deeper still."<sup>7</sup>

Over the next four decades following the war, Corrie traveled to over 60 countries, telling anyone who would listen: "...with Jesus even in our darkest moments, the best remains and the very best is yet to be."<sup>8</sup>

Corrie has shared her wisdom with the world in several books she wrote, including *The Hiding Place*. There's a movie by the same name, as well as video recordings of her talks available to watch on YouTube.

A few weeks ago I was watching her talk titled "Surrender."<sup>9</sup> She talked about how she surrenders her travels to the Lord, being available to go wherever He sends her to preach. Then she shared about a time when she was in Taiwan giving some talks. While there, the Lord revealed to her where she was to go next.

She went to the airport to meet with a travel agent to help her make the arrangements. When she arrived at the ticket counter, she said to the agent, "It's a rather complicated itinerary. Could you please write it all down? From here I must go to Sidney, Australia, then Auckland, New Zealand, back to Sidney, then on to Cape Town, South Africa, Tel Aviv, Israel, and Amsterdam, Holland."

The agent wrote it all down and then asked Corrie, "And what is your final destination?" Corrie said, "Heaven." The agent said, "How do you spell that?" Corrie said, "H-e-a-v-e-n." As the agent finished writing all the letters, she looked up at Corrie and said, "Oh, I didn't mean *that*."

And Corrie said, “But *I* meant it. But, you don’t have to write it down, for I have my ticket already.” “What do you mean?” the agent asked her. Corrie explained, “About 2,000 years ago, there was Someone who ordered my ticket for Heaven. And the only thing I had to do was simply get it from Him.”

There was another agent at a desk nearby who was overhearing their conversation. He looked at Corrie and said, “That’s true, lady!” Corrie replied to him, “Brother, do you have your reservation for Heaven?” He said, “Sure I do. I have received Jesus as my Savior. And he has made me a child of God. And a child of God has a reservation for the house of the Father.”

Corrie turned back to the woman and said, “If someone doesn’t have a reservation for an airplane, you’ll have great difficulties. But, if you don’t have a reservation for Heaven, you’ll have even greater difficulties.” Then she said to the man, “Brother, you must be sure that your colleague is not too late to get her ticket.”

Reflecting back on that conversation, Corrie said, “Was I just joking around with the agent? No. I meant it. And I ask you, ‘Do you have a reservation for Heaven?’ If you have not, then I will tell you from the Word of God how you can get it.”

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Friends, on this Christmas Night, we have heard from the Word of God. About His promise to send us a Savior.<sup>10</sup> About His fulfillment of that promise through His Son coming into our world.<sup>11</sup> Like those who traveled to see Him on that first Christmas, it remains the same for us on this Night.

I don’t know how far you traveled to be here tonight. Maybe from other cities, other states, or other countries. Maybe you traveled a long distance in your heart to be here tonight. But, thanks be to God, on this Holy Night, we have arrived at our final destination: Jesus Christ!

We will go forth from this church, back out into the travels of our daily life. But, for this moment, we set all other travels aside. And simply contemplate our final destination. “For God so loved the world that He [sent] His only Son” to save every one of us from our sins and show us the Way—to be the “ticket” to Heaven for all people.<sup>12</sup> We need only go to Him, and He gladly gives us our ticket, which had been reserved for each one of us.

And then we hold tight to the ticket in our heart, strong in faith and hope, knowing that no one can take that ticket from us. If we continue believing in Jesus as our Savior, following all that He taught us, then, no matter where our travels take us in this world, we can never lose that ticket.<sup>13</sup> And our ticket for Heaven—it truly is the best Christmas gift of all!

*Merry Christmas!*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:26-38

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:39

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:1-7

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:8-14, 15-16

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 2:1-12

<sup>6</sup> Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (book) (1971), 234

<sup>7</sup> Corrie ten Boom, 217

<sup>8</sup> Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (film) (1975), final scene of movie

<sup>9</sup> Corrie ten Boom, “Surrender” ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0rH5PH7A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0rH5PH7A))

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 9:5-6

<sup>11</sup> Luke 2:10-12

<sup>12</sup> John 3:16; John 14:1-14; Luke 2:10

<sup>13</sup> Titus 2:12