



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

The Christmas Story: Familiar and New...

Wednesday Prayer for December 20, 2016 Christmas

While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7

My first memories of the Christmas story are from my family. I am the youngest of five children, and one of our family traditions was to act out the story of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, the shepherds, the magi, and the animals in the stable. (I think we must have doubled-up on some parts...)

My understanding (from what I have been told), is that when I was just three months old, I played the role of baby Jesus. I eventually grew out of that role (it was taken over by one of my dolls). I then became a shepherd (see picture), angel, etc. as the years progressed.



When I got into high school, our youth director—in addition to her role of shepherding the youth—raised sheep. Someone made the decision one year to have a live Sunday School Christmas Program, using real sheep, a donkey, and other animals at her farm. Adding snow, cold, and animals to the mix made for a more chaotic than usual program, probably much more like the original story.

Later on, after graduating from college, I directed the Children's Choir in my congregation for eight years and got involved in helping create the Sunday School Christmas Program. One particularly memorable year was when the church burned down two days before the Program. We borrowed costumes from another church and went on with the show at the public school across the street.

Now this year, I am having a new experience with the Christmas story. I am singing in the angel choir for "[La Natividad](#)," a performance of In the Heart of the Beast Theater in Minneapolis. Our songs are in English and Spanish, all new to my Christmas repertoire. Within the telling of the familiar story, there is a strong message of love and welcome for all children, no matter their immigrant status.

I encourage you to think back upon your experiences hearing and/or telling the Christmas story. What stands out for you?

I also give thanks to God for you—for being someone who cares about the bigger story of Jesus, God-with-us, coming to earth. Your love and concern for children not being sexually exploited is made possible by God's love for you.

God knows the vulnerability of the little ones in our care. May God bless our going out--sometimes as shepherds, sometimes as angels, sometimes as wise ones—to share Christ's love with the world so all children are cherished!

Gracious and holy God, we thank you for coming to us as a baby in need of care and protection. Your great love for us both fills our hearts and points to how we may serve your children. Guide and bless our going out into the world! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Today's *Wednesday Prayer* was written by Deacon Amy Hartman, National Director of Cherish All Children.

Prayers also requested for:

- All of God's children, that their lives and futures are what we are seeking to protect and cherish. May we stay focused on what is best for God's children.
- Exploited children - that they would be rescued and healed; vulnerable children - that they would have safe people and places; perpetrators - that they would stop their abusive and exploitive behaviors; bystanders - that they would intervene on behalf of children whenever possible.
- Protection of Cherish All Children leaders, congregations, synods, and the overall organization, that God would thwart any efforts to undermine this ministry.

Cherish All Children

Cherish All Children is an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation.

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