



Advent/St. Nick/Holy Family/Christmas meeting 12-6-07

Prayer:All powerful and loving God, increase our strength of will to do good so that we can each be instruments of your love here on earth. May we prepare for Christmas and the coming of Jesus with an open mind and heart, and thus allow this Christmas to have special meaning for each of us. May we learn the spirit of sharing and giving through the example of St. Nicholas. May your love for each of us bring us ever closer to you. Amen.

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to the those in need and for his love for children.

Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were therefore destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home-providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for St. Nicholas. And so St. Nicholas is a gift-giver.

Holy Family skit-Testimony from Joseph

Kara: Good evening and welcome to Dr. Kindel. Today we have an interesting case between a young carpenter, Joseph and his fiancée, Mary. Let's bring in Joseph.

Andy: Hello, Dr. Kindel.

Kara: Welcome, Joseph. . . nice coat.

Andy: Thank you. My father gave it to me.

Kara: Now, Joseph, tell us about your fiancée, Mary.

Andy: We were engaged a few months ago until just recently when she informed me that she is pregnant. There is no way it's mine.

Kara: Hmm. . . Has she told you who the father is?

Andy: She claims the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Kara: Oh?

Andy: She says an angel appeared to her, telling her that she would be the mother of . . . the Son of God.

Kara: Do you believe her?

Andy: I want to, but I just can't, I need a sign.

Kara: What do you intend to do?

Andy: Just break the arrangement quietly, I've lost too much sleep over this already.

Kara: Well, on that note, let's bring in Mary.

Jenn: Thank you, Dr. Kindel.

Kara: So Mary, tell us your side of the story.

Jenn: I was praying outside in the garden one day when an Angel, Gabriel was his name, came to me. He informed me that I was chosen to be the mother of God's son.

Kara: What was your initial reaction?

Jenn: At first, I was unsure, but as the angel told me, "all things are possible with God." He also told me that my cousin is pregnant as well, even though she is old.

Kara: Is she?

Jenn: Yes, I visited her myself.

Kara: And you told this story to Joseph?

Jenn: Yes

Kara: And he does not believe you?

Joseph wakes with a start

Andy: Mary!

Jenn: Joseph?

Andy: I've been a fool. I've just had a dream from God. An angel told me that your story is true.

Jenn: Praise God!

Andy: Will you forgive me?

Jenn: Of course.

couple leaves

Kara: *Ending Thought* After seeing this couple and discussing their situation with them, I think the lesson to be learned here is to not jump to conclusions and to say "yes" to God. This also brings up another interesting point. Watching Joseph's struggle, I can't help but wonder what I, or what YOU would do in this situation.

Small Group Questions:

Holy Family

1. What would you do in Mary's position?
2. What would you do in Joseph's position?
3. What did you think about what Andy said?
4. How can we be more like Joseph and Mary and say "yes" to God?
5. What do you think would've happened if Joseph had said, "no."
6. What would it be like to have God as your child?

My Family

1. How has your family ever had to trust in God to get through a rough time?
Does your family do activities together such as meals, church, other activities?
2. How do other groups/ organizations or situations in your life relate to the Holy Family? (ex: "L.I.F.E. is like a family to me")
3. What can/do you do to make your family more like the perfect Holy Family? --Not every family is perfect; what does your family do to resolve conflicts?

Closing Prayer: Lord, bless us and our families during this Christmas season with peace and joy. Grant that each one of us may reflect on Your goodness. Rid our hearts of fear and distress, loneliness and pain, leaving only the serenity and security of resting in Your everlasting love. Amen.