



Of Seeds and Flowers



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"AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED"

A few years ago I was preparing a young couple for marriage. About a half hour into our session I noticed the young man welling up with tears in his eyes. I quickly asked him, "Did I say something that hurt or offended you?" He replied, "No, it is just that my guardian angel has appeared in the corner of the room and his presence touches me so deeply." He said that this wasn't the first time but periodically his angel appeared to him and it was always a spiritually moving experience.

Angels are real. At birth I believe each of us is given a guardian angel to protect, to guide, to care for us. They are a gift and we need to appreciate and feel comfortable in calling upon their help in difficult or stressful situations. In first grade I was taught the following Angel Prayer which I have often prayed: *Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day (or night) be at my side to light to guard to rule and guide, Amen.*

When angels appear they come in angelic bodies. They can be frightening at first because they are about nine feet tall and so, often their first words are, "Fear not." Their appearance is much different than fat, small, semi-clad angels that artists depict. In any group of seriously committed Christians about 25% of the people will raise their hands when asked, "Have you ever seen an angel or your angel?" What a comforting and affirming by experience piece of knowledge.



I read a very touching story about angels in a recent article by Judith MacNutt of Christian Healing Ministries. Judith wrote, Years ago, before I married, but after spending time in Israel, I spent about a year speaking and traveling around America with a friend, Lynne. We went to many small churches to give talks about Israel. One night, we had about fifteen people in a room where we were going to present a slide show and give our talk.

The worship leader, Sandy, had a guitar and she started playing some beautiful worship songs. I'd been around Christians most of my life, so I knew most of the Christian songs. But I didn't recognize any of these songs, and they were all remarkable. So at the end of the evening, I walked over to her and asked, "Did you write those songs?" She said, "No, I wish I could say that I did." I replied, "Well, who did write them?" She answered, "The angels." I asked, "Well, how did that happen?" She said, "I used to go into the desert wilderness; I would take my guitar and praise God. The second time that I was there, the angels appeared, and they sang the songs you just heard." They were incredible worship songs.

One night when she was leaving the desert, Sandy walked past a run-down cabin where an old man was sitting alone in a rocking chair, just rocking back and forth. He saw the guitar on her shoulder and asked, "Have you been out there singing with the angels?" She said, "You've heard them?" He replied, "Oh, they sing every night. That's why I sit on the Porch."

Judith further wrote that when she lived in Israel, every Christmas eve she would go out to the special place they call the "Shepherd's Field" and try to imagine what that first Christmas was like. To see not only one angel but the whole sky lit up with a host of angels all singing: "Glory to God in high heaven. peace on earth to those on whom His favor rests." Luke 2,14

You are FAVORED!!

May His peace rest on you and your family this Christmas and bless your New Year!



A DROP OF RAIN...A BIT OF SUN

THE Christmas Chimes: Everything is in readiness ... The tree is trimmed ... The boxes stacked in glittering disarray under the tree, Why Don't I Hear The Chimes?

Remember the small boy who made the chimes ring in a fictional story years ago? As the legend went, the chimes would not ring unless a gift of love was placed on the altar. Kings and men of great wealth placed untold jewels there, but year after year the church remained silent.

Then one Christmas Eve, a small child in a tattered coat made his way down the aisle, and without anyone noticing he took off his coat and placed it on the altar. The chimes rang out joyously throughout the land to mark the unselfish giving of a small boy.

I used to hear chimes ... I heard them the year one of my sons gave me a tattered piece of construction paper on which he had crayoned two hands folded in prayer and a moving message. OH COME HOLY SPIT!

I heard them the year I got a shoe box that contained two baseball cards and the gum was still with them. I heard Christmas chimes the Christmas the kids all got together and cleaned the garage.

They're gone, aren't they? The years of the lace doilies fashioned into snowflakes ... the hands traced in plaster of Paris ... the Christmas tree of pipe cleaners. The thread spools that held small candles. They're gone.

The chubby-hands that-clumsily used up \$2 worth of paper to wrap a cork coaster are now sophisticated enough to take a number and have the gift wrapped professionally.

The childish decision of when to break the ceramic piggy bank with a hammer to spring the 59 cents is now resolved by a credit card.

The muted thump of pajama-covered feet padding down the stairs to tuck her homemade crumb scrapers beneath the tree has given way to pantyhose and fashion boots to the knee.

It'll be a good Christmas. We'll eat too much. Make a mess in the living room. Throw the warranties into the fire by mistake. Drive the dog crazy taping bows to his tail. Return cookies to the plate with a bite taken out of them. Listen to Christmas music.

But Lord ... what I would give to bend low and receive a gift of toothpicks and library paste and hear the chimes just one more time! - Erma Bombeck

An angel was walking down the street carrying a torch in one hand and a pail of water in the other. A woman asked the angel, "What are you going to do with the torch and with the pail?" The angel said, "With the torch, I'm going to burn down the mansions of heaven, and with the pail of water I'm going to put out the fires of hell. **Then we shall see who really loves God.**"

Win-lose, good-bad, sin-virtue, heaven-hell, reward-



punishment scenario that seems to be in our religious hard drive. It is only GRACE (THE LIFE OF GOD HIMSELF) AND PRAYER (deep, contemplative prayer) that move us beyond a long list of "requirements" to a religion of real transformation into Christ, love, freedom, peace, joy. - A NEW MIND (Romans 12:2) or a "NEW SELF" (Ephesians 4: 23-24.) **Then we shall see who REALLY LOVES GOD. At Christmas we certainly know that he loves us!!**

It began with the simple cry of a baby.

**Jesus was an unplanned pregnancy!
Mary was an unwed mother!**

Mary says: "I present Jesus to you this Christmas morning: He is my Son and He is the Son of God! He is the Morning Star; the Prince of Peace, the gift of the Father. Let your glance meet with his, and tell me if he is a beautiful baby, an adorable little One? You can kiss Him and touch his little heart, if you want to, and let him reach out and touch you."

'To His own He came yet His own did not accept Him. Any (ANY) who did accept Him He EMPOWERED to become CHILDREN OF GOD. John, 1: 12.

Old Irish Blessing: "May love and peace be the first to lift the latch on your door and the Christ Child be guided to your home by the light of your heart! "

Irish Christmas Prayer: "The love of God upon you, the peace of God within you. The grace of God beside you, the joy of God surround you!" May the glory of Christ's birth shine on you!! God does not love you because you are good but you are good BECAUSE GOD LOVES YOU!! You'll never change your life until you change what you **DO DAILY**. The secret to having it all is knowing that you already **DO!! He LIVES IN YOU!! Feel your goodness.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFUL LOVE. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL FOR ALL OF YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT YOUR PRAYERS AND CARDS, YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT. I WANTED TO SEND EACH OF YOU A CHRISTMAS CARD THIS YEAR BUT A NEW SHOWER, PAINT JOB ON THE FAMILY ROOM, DUCKS, GRANDCHILDREN CARE ETC. HAD OTHER IDEAS.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED JOY FILLED NEW YEAR!!

WHAT CAN I GIVE HIM,
POOR AS I AM?
IF I WERE A SHEPHERD,
I WOULD BRING HIM A LAMB;
IF I WERE A WISE MAN,
I WOULD DO MY PART;
YET WHAT CAN I GIVE HIM?
GIVE HIM MY HEART.

- Christina Rossetti



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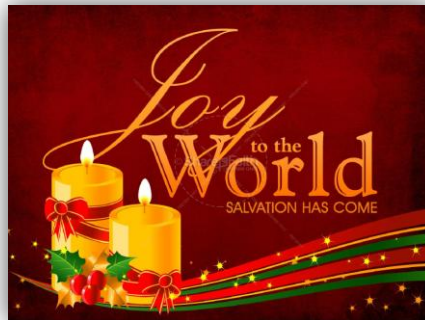
SPEAKING SOFTLY

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER - The following Christmas prayer was delivered by a U. S. Senate Chaplain, Peter Marshall on Dec. 19, 1947 in the U. S. Senate, addressed to a victorious nation recovering from World War II. "We thank thee, O God, for the return of the wondrous spell of this Christmas season that brings its own sweet joy into our jaded and troubled hearts.

Forbid it. Lord that we should celebrate without understanding what we celebrate, or, like our counterparts so long ago, fail to see the star or to hear the song of glorious promise.

As our hearts yield to the spirit of Christmas, may we discover that it is Thy Holy Spirit who comes-not a sentiment but a power- to remind us of the only way by which there may be peace on earth and good will among men. May we not spend Christmas, but keep it, that we may be kept in its hope, through Him who emptied Himself in coming to us that we might be **filled with peace and joy in returning to God.** Amen".

"If Christmas didn't already exist we would have had to invent it. There has to be at least one day in the year to remind us we're here for something else besides our general cussedness. "
- Eric Severeid



*"THERE IS SUCH RICHNESS
AND GOODNESS IN THE
NATIVITY THAT IF WE
SHOULD SEE AND DEEPLY
UNDERSTAND, WE SHOULD
BE DISSOLVED IN
PERPETUAL JOY."*
- MARTIN LUTHER

"Make ready for Christ the Savior", shouts Thomas Merton, "whose smile, like lightning, sets free the song of everlasting glory that now sleeps in your paper flesh; like dynamite." WOW!!!

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