



St Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

Newsletter

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Christmas Reflections on a Song

By Peter Georges

*Some children see him bronzed and brown,
The Lord of heaven to earth come down,
Some children see him bronzed and brown,
With dark and heavy hair.*

*Some children see him dark as they,
Sweet Mary's son to whom we pray,
Some children see him dark as they,
And ah, they love him too.*

*The children in each different place
Will see the Baby Jesus' face
Like theirs but bright with heav'nly grace
And filled with holy light!*

--Wihla Hutson



How do we see Jesus? In my innocent youth, I accepted this song at “face” value with all its sweet sentimentality. Of course I know that the historical Jesus was a Jew, a white man, a *muzungu*. Ugandans know this too. (There is no shortage of religious pictures in Uganda.) Do the words of this song simply reflect a naïve and idealistic worldview from the 1950s that has no relevance today in any context?

Where do we see Jesus? What is the meaning of the Incarnation? Who is that baby in the manger? Is the Christmas Story merely a nice fairy tale that gives us a vague sense of well-being for a few weeks every December? Or can we begin to comprehend the terrible and holy truth that God Himself chose to be born as that most helpless of creatures—a baby human being? We're told He did this out of love. What kind of love is this? What does it mean to us today?

The implications of this love are staggering. By taking on our human condition, Christ—God incarnate—endured the suffering and humiliation of the cross and all the events leading up to his crucifixion. But it doesn't end there. Because he assumed our flesh, he now shares in the unique and personal suffering of each of his children. That is why he could say, “Whatever you did to one of the least among us, you did it to me.”

When confronted by the poverty, hunger, and disease so pervasive in Uganda, I've cried out to God in anger and despair, “If you love us like you say you do, how can you allow innocent children to suffer in this way?” O foolish sinner that I am! Jesus is there with each suffering child—sharing the sharp pangs of hunger, the fever of malaria, the tears of insecurity and abandonment. Yes, it would be so convenient if God would just part the heavens and come down to make everything right. But is that what we really want? Are we prepared to answer for what we have done—or not done—for “the least

of these?” God has provided all that is necessary for his children. In our world today there is more than enough food, medicine, and money to meet every need. There are more than enough people to love and comfort the lonely, the sick, and the dying. God has provided all that is necessary, but he’s left the task of distribution to us. So far, we’ve not done a very good job of it. Like Ebenezer Scrooge and his partner, Jacob Marley, we have our business to attend to. And for poor Marley, the realization of the truth came too late.

“Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

I can no longer look upon the baby in the manger with the guileless eyes of a child. I have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I know the very worst that we are capable of doing to one another. Yet the hope of the Incarnation assures us that we are not alone. We must not yield to despair. The Savior is there in the flesh with each of his suffering creatures. His love is there, even if the sufferer is unaware of it. And the sufferer can become aware of Christ’s love if only we are willing to be the instrument of it. This is the great mystery of true compassion—that we see Christ in the face of the sufferer, and that the sufferer sees Christ in the action of our love. God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him.

The blessed Mother Gavrilia considered this: “Africa . . . has the greatest treasure—the barefoot and hungry Christ, whom the plunderers had abandoned because their dimmed eyes could not see him.”

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. Grace be with you all.
Amen.

The St. Nicholas Uganda Children’s Fund currently assists over 160 orphans and vulnerable children with education, nutrition, and health care. If you would like to help, please send your donation to:

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