

Christmas 1, 2018

Trinity Bend

John 1: 1-18

There was an article in the New York Times last week referencing a rash of “baby Jesus” robberies out of creches. Some churches were tethering the baby Jesus down; others were putting up security cameras to try to catch the perpetrators.

There didn't seem to be any one reason given for the robberies. Some were thought to be teenage pranks or by persons struggling mentally.

While the article sited that many churchgoers were understandably distressed, I found my own thoughts agreeing with the remarks of one pastor who was interviewed.

He said, "Hey, if they steal that one, we'll keep putting another one out," He went on, "I can't think of a better way to get the message of Christmas out than for people to keep taking Jesus home." I like to think that the stolen baby Jesus is now in their home. Who knows, one day soon, maybe he'll get into their hearts.

"The word became flesh and lived among us"

Back in mid-December I was given a picture of a little girl. She was a refugee child from Syria. She had a beautiful face with dark curly hair that was pulled back, but a little messy in the front. There was little dirt on her face, I guessed her age to be between 8 & 10. I could tell she smiled gently for the photographer. But when I looked at her beautiful dark eyes, haunting eyes. I could see they were wet and she was about to cry.

I just wanted to give her a Kleenex and say go play with your friends. Then I remembered that she is a refugee child and maybe just arrived in the refugee camp and probably didn't have any friends. Maybe her parents or grandparents just wanted to keep her close so they wouldn't lose her.

Then I remembered Mary and Joseph had to flee to Egypt after the 3 wise men came for a visit. They needed to move away from Bethlehem due to King Herod, who was afraid he would lose his power, so he ordered all the little boys under the age of 2 killed in Bethlehem and the surrounding area.

So Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt. They moved to a land where they did not speak the language, probably no jobs for Joseph and no ladies to help Mary with a baby, who became a toddler. They too were refugees.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

There is another story I would like to share.

This one happened after the war in Serivo. A photographer was taking pictures of all the destruction immediately after that war, when he saw a child in the street.

Then he heard one shot, just one shot. After that shot a man ran out into the street, picked up the child and yelled. "My child! My child! She has been shot, Help me! Help me!"

The photographer took the man holding the bleeding child in his car. As they were heading to the medical facility, the man kept saying, "my child, my child please go faster." So the photographer drove faster and faster, around cars and trucks racing to the hospital.

When they got there a doctor took the child in his arms into the emergency facility. So the man and the photographer waited. They paced, they wondered what would happen. They prayed, they sat on a bench in silence just waiting. Hoping the child would live.

Finally the doctor came out and had the look no parent wants to see—
silence the 2 men knew that the child had died. She could not be saved.

Then the man said, “I’ve got to find her father.”

The photographer questioned, “Wait a minute, I thought you were her
father? ”

The man replied, “They are all our children.”

So I was moved by these stories, that I looked in the *Message* where Gene
Peterson says,

“The world became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.”

I continued to wonder what has this got to do with us in Bend?

I thought of the homeless children who live with their parents in a car or at Bethlehem Inn or at Nancy's House. Some might be sleeping on the floor at their Grandma's House, but that usually doesn't last too long.

I thought of the Children who come to Family kitchen for a meal, some come at lunch and some come at dinner.

Here we are in a very nice place in Bend. And there are kids who have little or nothing. Their parents don't say anything because they are too embarrassed to admit that they lost their home or can't afford to buy food at the end of the month.

Then, I wondered just what Trinity is doing about helping kids. Between Thanksgiving and now you supported 6 organizations that support kids and their families. The Family Access Network, (FAN), Salvation Army with gift bags for Children, Condega, Nicaragua (where school clothes, and school supplies are given to children) Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD), which has been supporting folks in CA who lost their homes due to fires, Family Kitchen,(where all people are welcome to come and have a good meal and are treated with dignity) and Cove/COPY, the group that sends “at risk kids” to camp for a week.

Then during this past year, there were 9 more organization that support kids and families that were added by your outreach funds. Which come from the Birthday Box and the Bazaar. This does not count all the volunteer hours that most of you put in. Nor the prayer support you give the workers.

It would seem to me that you have let Jesus into your heart and you know “The world became flesh and moved into the neighborhood.”