

The Fish Net

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Dear Friends,

This past October while on holidays, Susan and I spent some time in Niagara-on-the-Lake. While there we stopped by a couple of stores including a large Christmas-themed store and another that sells merchandise imported from the developing world. Both of these stores had nativity sets and they were all different; some were traditional, one had a South American theme with llamas in the place of camels, while another consisted of bear figurines! As different as they all were though, they shared one thing in common; they were “warm” and sentimental.

Now this of course is how many of us like to envision the nativity itself. Martin Luther’s Christmas hymn captures this well:

The cattle are lowing,
The baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus,
No crying he makes.

The nativity scene is so “feel good” but that is only a part of the Christmas story; there is another part that many of us prefer to ignore. As Matthew tells us, after the departure of the Wise Men:

“An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill him.’”

This isn't nearly as "feel good" as the manger scene but this is just as much a part of the Christmas story as the angels and shepherds. The Holy Family were what we today would call refugees or migrants and I am left to wonder; what would have ever become of Mary, Joseph and even Jesus himself if the Egyptians of the day had built a wall or forbidden entry to these foreigners fleeing for their lives? What if the Egyptian authorities had barred them entry, labelling them as criminals, terrorists and worse, a threat to Egyptian jobs or the Egyptian way of life? Yes, the Christmas story is a nice heart-warming sentimental story but its message is also timeless.

Wishing you a most blessed Christmas!