**Christmas Nativity**

**After Billy notices the manger scene in the neighbor’s front yard, he runs into the house and yells out to his mother: “Know what the McCormick’s have on their front lawn? An activity scene.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Our four-year-old granddaughter, Susan, had been engrossed in drawing a picture of the Nativity scene and finally took it to her father for his approval. “Why, it’s excellent, Susan,” he said. “But why is one of St. Joseph’s legs so much longer than the other?” “Oh, he’s stamping his foot,” she explained. “He wanted a girl.” *(Lenore Patton Christ, in Reader's Digest)***

**Our dog-loving six-year-old son was to be in our church’s Nativity play. One day, as the holiday approached, my wife and I found him in front of the Christmas tree in our living room, down on all fours and barking. When we asked what he was doing, he replied, “I have to practice. I’m going to be one of the shepherds.” *(Robert Hatch, in Reader's Digest)***

**Innkeeper says to Joseph and Mary: "Sorry folks, the Inn is booked up. God Himself couldn't get a room here tonight." *(The Lutheran Witness cartoon)***

**Dolly says to Billy while watching a Christmas movie on TV: “The three wise men brought gifts of Gold, Frankenstein and Mirth.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comics)***

**Dolly asks her mother: “Joseph was a carpenter, so why didn’t he build a nice little crib?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**As Dolly reads the Christmas story to the other children, she says: “Mary and Joseph couldn’t check into the hotel ‘cause the cleaning ladies were still doing the room.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**On Christmas Eve, 1223, on a wooded hilltop near the village of Greccio, in central Italy, St. Francis of Assisi set up the first crib, complete with ox and donkey and the infant in the manger (a local ritual enacted to this day), bestowing upon Christmas a new, tender emphasis--the poverty and humanity of Christ. *(Ernest O. Hauser, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Billy: “Daddy, where should we set up the Christmas crib this year?” Dad: “Pick a spot where we’ll all see it often.” So the children put it on top of the computer keyboard.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Billy: "I drew the Mother and Child, but I'm havin' trouble doin' Round John Virgin." *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**In 1223, St. Francis of Assisi assembled one of the first Nativity scenes in Greccio, Italy. *(Associated Press)***

**In Baton Rouge, La., quoting the Bible in a Southern drawl, one homeowner with a front yard Nativity Scene garbed three of the characters in firemen's outfits, to explain the Biblical passage, "The Three Wise men came from afar." (*Bill Flick, 1997)***

**Preparing for a large Christmas Eve family gathering, I had been giving out orders like a drill sergeant: “Pick up your things! Don’t get your clothes dirty! Put away those toys.” My four-year-old daughter had been underfoot, so I sent her to the next room to play with our wooden Nativity set. As I scurried around setting the table I overheard her make-believe conversation in an all-too-familiar tone of voice: “I don’t care who you are, get those camels out of my living room!” *(Catherine J. Halverson)***

**Churches throughout the U.S. are attaching the GPS tracking devices to their nativity statues of the baby Jesus. In recent years, there’s been a nationwide spate of thefts of nativity statues by vandals, prompting the GPS installations. “There’s been no attempt of theft since we announced that we’re tracking our Jesus,” said the official at St. Ambrose Roman Catholic Church in New Jersey. “We love this.” *(The Week magazine, December 17, 2010)***

**The jury of modern biblical scholarship is still deliberating on the historicity of the Nativity. There was no census of the Roman world, but that is merely Luke's device to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where the Messiah was supposed to be born. If you'll check Matthew's version, no such roll-call tax is mentioned. In fact, these two gospels are the only biblical source about the Nativity, and they differ on almost every point in the story. Luke gives us the census, “no room at the inn" and the manger, shepherds and the angel choirs. Matthew reports a house, the Star, and the Wise Men. Our traditional Christmas crèche -- baby Jesus cradled in straw, angels on the stable roof, shepherds and animals and Wise Men kneeling together, a star hovering above the whole scene--is a composite picture of both gospels. (Thomas Shepherd, in Unity magazine)**

**Mary and Joseph went to all the inns in town, but they were all full. Finally, Joseph begged one innkeeper, “Please, we must find shelter. My wife is going to have a baby.” The callous innkeeper replied, “That's not my fault.” And Joseph answered, “It's not mine either.” (King Duncan & Angela Akers, in Amusing Grace, p. 348)

One child’s interpretation of the Christmas story: “And there was no room for them in the inn because Joseph forgot to make reservations.” *(King Duncan & Angela Akers, in Amusing Grace)***

**Billy says to his little brother laying to his bed: "Just be glad you don't have to take your nap in a manger." *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**After watching the TV report, Ziggy says: "I think that the last good news that we heard from the Middle East was broadcast by the three wise men!" *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**While observing the Nativity scene, Billy says to his sister and brother: "Jesus was lucky. Our hospital doesn't let animals in." *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**The Aramaic word for Magi is Magoshey. Its root is derived from the Babylonian and Persian word Magno, meaning receptive. It is from this root that our words magnetic and magic are derived conveying the impression of greatness by means of wonders. The Magi, however, were not kings as usually pictured. The Magi were Chaldean astrologers, soothsayers, fortune tellers, and sun worshippers. Being the great astronomers of their day, they studied the stars and planets in connection with their temple worship and as the result of their study, they were able to divide the years into months, weeks, and days. (George Lamsa, in Gospel Light, p. 12)**

**Billy, showing pictures to his Mom, says: "Look at this one, Mommy! Baby Jesus in a nest!" *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Dolly: “I’m going to be Mary in the Christmas play, and Billy’s a German shepherd.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**The annual Christmas playlet was the order of the day at a private school, and the coach chose an amiable, beautifully brought-up boy of seven to play the role of the innkeeper at Bethlehem. The boy had trouble learning to turn away Mary and Joseph with a curt: “There is no room at the inn,” but had his part down pat by the end of the rehearsal period. Then came the big night, with his proud mother and father beaming at him from the front row. He boomed out his “There is no room at the inn” with great authority, but then he couldn’t resist adding, “But come in, anyhow, and have some cookies and milk.” *(Sunshine Magazine)***

**Political party loyalties tend to surface, even at Christmas. There's a Republican who has a nativity scene out in front of his house. In one part of it, Joseph is leading Mary into the manger, but she isn't on a donkey. It's an elephant. (Bits & Pieces)**

 **During a “guest” appearance on NBC’s “Today Show,” a reindeer from the nearby Radio City Music Hall’s “Christmas Spectacular” shed an antler while on the air after the hot TV lights apparently confused the deer and convinced him spring indeed was here. *(Bill Flick, in The Pantagraph, 1997)***

**Dolly asks her brother Billy: "Shouldn't the swaddling clothes be blue for a boy?" *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Dolly asks to her Mom: "I'll get PJ ready for bed. Do we have any swaddling clothes?" *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**After painting pictures of the nativity, the preschool children gave a verbal description. Here are a few of their thoughts: "Jesus was born. Mary and Joseph are in the stable. The three wise men are going to the stable bec ause they saw stars." "They saw the star. They are riding three mooses to see baby Jesus." "Moses and Mary and Jesus are in the stable. The German shepherds are looking for Jesus." *(Ruth Wondrasch, in The Lutheran Witness)***

**During the week before Christmas vacation, my child’s second-grade parochial-school teacher related the story of the birth of Christ, telling part of the narrative each day. On the fourth day, she quizzed the children, “What is baby Jesus’s mother’s name?” “Mary! Mary! Mary!” they answered, waving their little hands in the air. “Wonderful!” Sister congratulated them. “Now what is baby Jesus’s father’s name?” Silence filled the classroom. Finally, one small boy jumped up, pumping his hand wildly toward the ceiling. “I know, Sister!” he shouted. “It’s Virg!” “Virg?” the stunned nun asked. “Yeah,” explained the child. “You know -- everybody’s heard of Virg and Mary.” *(Judy M. Booth)***

**Dolly reads to her little brothers: "Then the three wise men came to baby sit while Mary and Joseph went caroling." *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

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