

TWO BABIES IN THE MANGER

In 1994, two Americans were invited by the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics in their prisons, at their businesses, fire and police departments, and even at a large orphanage. They were also told they could teach from the perspective of their faith.

So they went. The experience they had in the Russian orphanage proved to be particularly illuminating. According to one of them, Will Fish (his real name), there were about 100 boys and girls in the orphanage – children who had been abandoned, abused and left in the care of the government-run program. Fish told what happened as the holiday season approached and it was time for the orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas.



“We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem,” said Fish. “Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger. Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word. Completing the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins I had brought with me. No colored paper was available in the city.”

Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel, cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady threw away as she left Russia, were used for the baby’s blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt the two Americans had brought from the United States.

“The orphans were busy assembling their mangers as I walked among them to see if they needed any help,” Fish said. “All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy’s manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the boy why there were two babies in the manger.”

The boy related the happenings of the Christmas story accurately, until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha began to ad lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, “And when Mary laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no Mama and I have no Papa, so I don’t have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with Him. But I told Him I couldn’t, because I didn’t have a gift to give Him like everybody else did.”

(more)

“Still, I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift,” Misha continued. “I thought maybe if I kept Him warm, that would be a good gift. So I asked Jesus, ‘If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?’ And Jesus told me, ‘If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me. So I got into the manger. That’s when Jesus looked at me and He told me I could stay with Him – for always.”

As Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed with tears. The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon or abuse him; someone who cared for him; someone who would stay with Him – for always.

We call Jesus by the name Immanuel, which means God is with us. In this Advent season, we discover the truth, as did Misha, that the God who came in Jesus Christ will never abandon or abuse us. But He will stay with us ... for always.

For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5 NKJV

– Beecher Hunter