

The True Meaning of Christmas

How do we retell the story of Christmas each year without losing the meaning of its true gift? Long, long ago, there was the true spirit of Christmas. The spirit of a fourth century bishop returns this Christmas Eve, named St. Nicholas of Turkey. Tonight, Christmas past and Christmas present join together. Here's what he would want us to know.

I just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room and to my surprise, St. Nick himself stepped out from behind the Christmas tree.

He placed his finger over his mouth so I would not cry out. "What are you doing?" I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat, and I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know.

He then answered me with a simple statement.

"TEACH THE CHILDREN!"

I was puzzled; what did he mean? He anticipated my question, and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood bewildered, St. Nicholas said,

"Teach the children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that now-a-days Christmas has forgotten."



Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **FIR TREE** and placed it before the mantle.

"Teach the children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind, all the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of man's thoughts turning toward heaven."



He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant **STAR**.

"Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of His promise."



He then reached into his bag and pulled out a **CANDLE**.

"Teach the children that the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness."

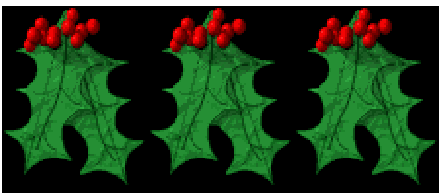
Once again he reached into his bag and removed a **WREATH** and placed it on the tree.

"Teach the children that the wreath symbolizes the real

nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection."



He then pulled from his bag an ornament of himself.
"Teach the children that I, St. Nick, symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December."



He then brought out a **HOLLY LEAF**.
"Teach the children that the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly represents the blood shed by Him."

Next he pulled from his bag a **GIFT** and said,
"Teach the children that God so loved the world that HE gave HIS only begotten SON..." "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift."



"Teach the children that the wise men bowed before the Holy **BABE** and presented **HIM** with gold, frankincense

and myrrh. We should always give gifts in the same spirit of the wise men."



St. Nicholas then reached in his bag and pulled out a **CANDY CANE** and hung it on the tree.

"Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds' crook. The crook on the staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper."



He reached in again and pulled out an **ANGEL**.

"Teach the children that it was the angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will toward men.'"



Suddenly I heard a soft twinkling sound, and from his bag he pulled out a **BELL**.

"Teach the children that as the lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring mankind to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return."

St. Nick looked back and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, "Remember, teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is, and I bow down to worship **HIM, our LORD, our GOD.**"

We worship the Holy Child down through the centuries as it was on the First Christmas. Yes, all other Christmases are only anniversaries. Yet each year is born once again in our hearts to be our Savior and King. Long live the King! And long live the true spirit of Christmas. Amen.