



December 18, 2019

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

I wondered where my youngest child had wandered off to as I looked around the joyfully noisy Christmas family gathering. All the presents had been opened, and the scene of the room was one that was filled with laughter, celebration, and colorful bits of ribbon, wrapping, and tissue paper. It seemed, that while my older children were busy playing with their new toys and listening to stories of Christmases past -- my youngest daughter had quietly slipped away.

When I found her, she was standing on her tippy toes stretching as tall as she could to catch a better glimpse of the hand carved nativity set that had thoughtfully resumed its annual place atop the buffet table in my parent's dining room. Her eyes widened as her little fingers gently traced the lines and cracks in the old wood that had been skillfully carved into magi, shepherds, sheep, camels, Mary, Joseph and, of course, the baby Jesus.

I gently knelt down beside her -- quietly joining her in her wonder as she looked upon the main characters of the sacred story of this Holy night. The new toys in the other room did not seem to capture her attention the way these ancient wooden figures did. I will never forget the expression on her face as she looked on in awe at the beautiful and careful craftsmanship of her great grandfather—my own beloved and faithful grandfather. I hummed the tune, "What Child is this?" as I sat beside her and found my own mind wandering through Christmas memories of long ago.

Every time I look upon this same nativity set, I, too, am brought back to a place of wonder and awe -- of being a small child, of catching a glimpse of a master craftsman's handiwork -- of being invited into imagining what the night of Jesus' birth might have been like as I traced the lines meticulously carved into the wood by my own grandfather's hands.

When I think of Christmas, I do not really remember the presents or toys. What I do remember is the Christmas tree in my grandparent's dining room, and the candles shining brightly in the living room windows. I can see the way the twinkle lights on the mantle shined light upon the smooth surfaced bowed heads of the hand carved Mary and Joseph. I can feel the warmth of the woodstove, the minty and smoky scent of their home and hear the distant joyful voices of those I love in the other room.

I remember my grandmother coming to find me one night as I peered up over the counter to catch a glimpse of the Holy Family. I can remember how she gently knelt down beside me quietly joining me in wonder, as together, we entered into the sacred story of this Holy birth. I can remember her humming softly the tune, "What child is this?"

Leave it to a little child to lead me to such a beautiful moment of remembering ...

I wonder what gifts you will find as you journey towards the manger, as you seek the Christ Child, following the yonder star of years before. I pray you, too, will be able to take a moment to step aside

from all the noise, the activities and the stuff to find yourself kneeling beside a small child – remembering ...

May it be so.

Amen.

Anne Marie

Rev. Anne Marie Holloway
Associate Minister