

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

The light of the world

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

The Christmas tree was colorful and warm. Red lights blinked off and on, reflected in the silver ornaments.

The Christmas crib rested quietly under the green branches of the tall tree. A tree light, the only white one, was the star over the stable where Mary and Joseph knelt beside the sleeping Christ child.

"That was a delicious meal," Mr. O'Neal complimented his wife. "And eating it with the whole family together again made it taste even better."

This was a special evening. Not only was it Christmas but it was Peter's seventh birthday. His older sister, June, was home from college. And his grandmother was visiting.

A storm was beginning to blow outside. But no one seemed to notice. It was so warm and bright in the living room.

Soon peals of thunder began to roll through the sky, making the windowpanes shake. Flashes of

lightning caused the lights to flicker.

"When can I open my birthday presents?" Peter asked.

Before his parents could answer, there was the terrifying cracking sound of lightning striking very close.

The living room was suddenly black. The tree lights no longer blinked. There was no light in the whole house. No light came in through the windows. The whole neighborhood was dark.

"I can't see anything," Peter said. "I'm afraid."

"I'll find a flashlight or a candle," his father said. On the way he bumped into the dining room table.

"This is the worst storm we've had for a long time," Peter's mother said. Peter could hear the fear in his mother's voice.

It seemed forever before his dad came back. The storm was getting even worse. They could hear fire sirens whining outside. The red flashing lights of the fire trucks passing by on the street added to the eerie feeling of danger.

Finally Peter's dad opened the

kitchen door. Soft, warm, flickering rays of light danced through the darkness.

Peter saw his dad's smiling face glowing in the light of the candle he held out in front of him. The light and the smile quieted Peter inside.

His dad set the candle on the coffee table. The tree ornaments reflected the small steady flame of the candle. Peter's mom came over and hugged him. His dad held June close. They all stared at the candlelight and then at each other.

"Thanks be to God," said grandmother with a sigh. They all laughed and began to relax.

"Now I think I know for the first time," Peter's mother said, "why a burning candle is a symbol of Jesus Christ in our lives."



(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

Missing Vowels

Fill in the vowels in the phrases below. All of the phrases are contained in this week's children's story.

1. st_r _v_r th_ st_bl_
2. _d_l_c _ _s m_l
3. P_t_r's s_v_nth b^rthd_y
4. h_m_ fr_m c_ll_g
5. th_ w_rst st_rm
6. r_d fl_sh_ng l_ghts
7. l_ght _f th_ c_ndl_
7. th_nks b_ t_G_d

answers: 1. star over the stable, 2. a delicious meal, 3. Peter's seventh birthday, 4. home from college, 5. the worst storm, 6. red flashing lights, 7. light of the candle, 8. thanks be to God.

a game

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Did the lights ever go out in your home the way they did in Peter's house during the storm? How did you feel when it got dark? How did you feel when the lights came on again?

Children's Reading Corner

"The Story of the Three Wise Kings," is a story delightfully retold and exquisitely illustrated. It is by Tomi De Paola. In the story, a new star appeared in the sky. Three kings, wise men who studied the stars each night, discovered it. Then, after consulting their books, they found out that the star was the sign that a great king was about to be born. Each king set out alone with a gift, intending to follow the star and find the child-king. But the kings met along the way and continued the journey together. The star led to Bethlehem. (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016, 1983. Paperback. \$4.95.)



Warmth

Using split logs in a wood-burning stove to protect against the rigors of a bitter winter, Sister Consiline Flynn brings the warmth of the Gospel message to children from the ranches of the high country surrounding St. John the Apostle Mission in Paisley, Oregon.

Sister Flynn helps children with the basics of Christianity in her religion classes in Paisley and adjacent missions that receive Extension Society aid. She is one member of a team of home missionaries who, in partnership with Extension, pursue the vital and urgent task of evangelization here in

the United States. But that team is too small to do the job without help. It needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we will bring Christ to those living in the home missions.

Write today for a free subscription to Extension magazine and discover the difference you can make. Together, and with God's grace, we can achieve His missionary goals here in our own beloved country.



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