

Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. This is how it happened. 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, Santa 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 him.

The words choked in my throat, as 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 there bewildered, Santa said, Teach the Children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that a now-a-day Christmas has forgotten!

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a FIR TREE and placed it on 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 that promise.

He then reached into the 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 then removed a WREATH and placed it on the tree. Teach the Children that the wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection.

He then pulled out from his bag an ornament of HIMSELF. Teach the Children that Santa Claus symbolizes the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December.

He reached in again and pulled out a HOLLY LEAF. Teach the Children the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly berries represent blood shed by Him.

Next he pulled out a GIFT from the bag 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 give gifts in the same spirit as the wise men."

Santa 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 shepherd's crook. The crook on the shepherd's staff helps bring back strayed sheep from 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.'

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 a bell, it should bring people to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return.

Santa looked at the tree and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, "Remember, teach the Children the true meaning of Christmas, and not to put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One who is, and I bow down and worship Him, our Lord, our God."