

From the Rector's Desk – Christmas 2019

by the Rev. Daniel Fournier



*The Reverend Daniel
Fournier
Photo credit:
Catherine Hyde*

Dear Friends,

You may remember that in my Christmas article last year I spoke about the traditions of Christmas in our home. I spoke about how Joan would build a beautiful Christmas village scene on the living room coffee table featuring buildings and churches, pathways and streetlights, and children playing in the snow. This display would be a restful, attractive scene in the midst of our living room. I also spoke about how last year we had to forgo the Christmas village scene because of the new additions to our family namely, Bella and Rosa, our two black cats. I spoke about them being the destroyers of this beautiful scene by making themselves at home in the midst of it.

Another tradition has been part of Joan's life and now mine as well. That is to collect different nativity scenes presenting an enculturated view of the birthplace of Jesus. For example, we have a traditional Inuit scene, as well as other scenes from different places in the world. We even have one that represents a black bear culture – which is kind of cute. So this is the background to my story.

Now moving forward to this year. As you all know in April and at the beginning of May, we travelled to Australia to reconnect with the Australian wing of the family including our two grandchildren there. One day as we were touring around a little resort town called Yarrawonga (a state border town on the shores of the Lake Mulwala), we ventured into a gift store.

It was a wonderful little store, rich in well-crafted souvenir items. We went looking that day because Joan was on the lookout for authentic aboriginal art created by Australia's first peoples. We did not see any at this store, nor any in this region. However, what we did find was for us so stunning!

Now before we ever entered the store or even went touring that day, Joan and I had mused that it would be funny if we came across something that was an Aussie Nativity scene. We were walking through the back of this shop (which had many rooms) when, "Lo and behold." There it was in stunning display, a true authentic Australian manger scene! The characters were colourful – kangaroos, koalas, and platypus dressed in traditional Aussie bush attire. The manger was a tin shed and the Southern Cross stars were shining over. How delightful! I will not tell you what we paid. But I knew we were not leaving the store without it. For us this was such an unexpected surprise and was certainly one of the highlights of our trip last April and May.



The Aussie Nativity Scene in the store



*The Aussie Nativity Scene at home
Photo credits: Daniel Fournier*

Now this brings us back to what I started talking about at the beginning – how last year, we did not set up Joan’s Christmas village because of our two darling kitties. This year we have taken the plunge and set up a beautiful Christmas village scene. Yes, the cats are curious and have walked through the display, but we figure that in time they will get bored with the scene. Something very special now is featured at the edge of this scene. A little scene of the first Christmas, under the Southern Cross as creatures, shepherds, wise men (kangaroos) and Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus remain.

It is wonderful that sometimes when we least expect it, we find delightful surprises in our lives. Our God is one of great surprises. The surprise is that God, that Jesus, and that the Spirit walks with us each and every day. Each and every one of us has a very special place in God’s heart. We find surprise and wonder that God loves us so very much that God would set into motion the gift of the incarnation, God with us, to draw us ever close to God’s heart. We find surprise and wonder that God would give the ultimate sacrifice of

coming into our form, our existence, our presence, and face the risk of what humans would do to Jesus. And through this would make the way clear for us for new life, everlasting life, everlasting joy, everlasting goodness, and everlasting fullness in God.

My prayer for each of you this year is that you will also discover the surprise that God has for you – the surprise that God’s desire is to gift you with every grace you need. May you experience those gifts through those in your life and in your love, through the many ways that God is simply saying to you, “I Love You”. May your Christmas season be filled with every hope and joy in God’s presence. May God bless you richly now and always.

In Christ’s Love, Daniel+
