

The "W" in Christmas

Each December I vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations - extensive card writing, endless baking, decorating, and even overspending. Yet still I found myself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments and, of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son Nicholas was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a six-year-old. For weeks he'd been memorizing songs for his school's "Winter Pageant." I didn't have the heart to tell him I'd be working the night of the production. Unwilling to miss his shining moment, I spoke with his teacher.

She assured me there'd be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then. Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise.

So, the morning of the dress rehearsal I filed in ten minutes early, found a spot on the cafeteria floor, and sat down. Around the room I saw several other parents quietly scampering to their seats. As I waited the students were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor. Then each group, one by one, rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as "Christmas," I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment – songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes, and good cheer.

So, when my son's class rose to sing "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken aback by its bold title.

Nicholas was aglow, as were all of his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters, and bright snowcaps upon their heads. Those in the front row, center stage, held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song. As the class would sing, "C is for Christmas," a child would hold up the letter C. Then "H is for Happy" and on and on, until each child holding up his portion had presented the complete message, "Christmas Love."

The performance was going smoothly until suddenly we noticed her; a small, quiet girl in the front row holding the letter "M" upside down, totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W." The audience of 1st through 6th graders snickered at this little one's mistake. But she had no idea they were laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her "W."

Although many teachers tried to shush the children, the laughter continued until the last letter was raised, and we all saw it together. A hush came over the audience, and eyes began to widen. In that instant we understood the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the chaos there was a purpose for our festivities. For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear:

"C H R I S T W A S L O V E"

And, I believe, He still is. Amazed in His Presence... humbled by His Love.

May each of you have a Merry Christmas as you reflect on His Amazing Love!