

Joseph at the Front of the Stable

Men have much to contribute at Christmas ...

Men have sometimes been labeled as the “stagehands” of Christmas: following through on the orders of their wives, and financing the extravaganza.

But when Ann Weems, in her book *Kneeling In Bethlehem*, thinks of Joseph’s place in the stable, she envisions him being more central to the Christmas story.

“Who put Joseph in the back of the stable?” she asks, “to stand as background for the magnificent light of the Madonna?”

Weems recalls how faithful Joseph has been “in spite of the gossip in Nazareth” and “in spite of the threat from Herod.” Actually, “it was he who named the Child Emmanuel.”

He was the kind of person who guarded his family and greeted the visitors whatever their status.

“When he wasn’t in the doorway, he was probably urging Mary to get some rest, gently covering her with his cloak, assuring her that he would watch the Child.” Can’t you imagine him holding the Baby, walking him and quieting him through the night until he closed his eyes?

“This Christmas, let us give thanks to God for this man of incredible faith, into whose care God placed the Christ Child.”

Notice, too, the way other fathers reach out during the Christmas season to show the love and care they have for their families and to reflect the deep spiritual truths that makes the season special. Listen to their suggestions, acknowledge their advice, be prepared to even do things in a different way at their behest.

Think of Joseph giving Jesus a grounding so solid that he would later dare to teach others a whole new way of thinking about relationships with each other – and with God.

“As a gesture of gratitude, let’s put Joseph in the front of the stable where he can guard and greet and cast an occasional glance at this Child.”

(written by Joyce Sasse)