Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Spirituality



Sr. Kelly Williams got this Nativity scene in Peru. (Courtesy of Kelly Wiliams)

by Sr. Kelly Williams

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

December 26, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

I will happily proclaim that I love every iteration of the manger scene, from the fragile ones that terrify me when I help set them up, to the live Nativity performed

by wiggly angels and sheep clad in sneakers alike. I always keep at least one image of the Holy Family Nativity scene up all year-round as a reminder that we are Incarnational people. I find the mystery of God unfolding in the imaginations of the artists creating these scenes.

To see the Christ child portrayed in every culture in the world brings such awe. It allows us all to imagine the Christ child and say — here's how he looks in my neighborhood, here's how he looks like my brother, here's what Christmastime looks like in my neck of the woods. And still with all the ways we portray the Holy Family, when we see those images and scenes and yard decorations we recognize them as the Holy Family no matter their clothing, or the iterations of a manger. We see the Christmas night and holiness that radiates. We get to see this Word made flesh who said, "Let me live with you on this earth, let me know what it is to cry, to be held, to laugh, to be exhausted, and to feel what it is to live in community":

> Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:8-12).

What a scene for our shepherd friends to encounter while they were hard at work during the night shift. Exhausted, delirious, ready to sleep, and here comes this vision of the angel inviting them to see their savior in the weirdest place imaginable for a leader to be. Where is the mighty king come to reign? Where is the grand entrance of a ruler? No, they are invited to see a poor family and be told that that baby is Christ the Lord, the one who has been foretold. Fear not? That seems pretty fearful to me. And yet they went. Terrified, confused, and possibly enjoying a serenade, they went to see this Christ child and there were others too who heard this news.

Advertisement

We have the Magi plotting the stars, putting together the pieces, and beginning their quest. Their journey must have been quite different than our shepherd friends and still they too were invited to seek the divine. They were people who had great status, ones who people looked to for answers, and still they were seeking.

Are we like shepherds hard at work, perhaps exhausted and spent, and still able to be transfixed by wonder and led into a sketchy place to witness the Lord of Lords and discover the king of kings in the poorest of the poor? Are we like the Magi who use the skills, tools and circumstances in which we live to protect the divine found within our neighbors, being ones who may have to go another way home to keep the Christ child safe?

I think one of the things I love about being Catholic is the whole celebration of the Christmas season. That Christmas is more than just Dec. 25. We keep celebrating the wonder of Christ's Incarnation. While we think about our favorite creche, and see all the players gathered, we know that on that very first Christmas everyone besides the Holy Family and that dear donkey were en route. I personally have always loved the practice of placing the Magi on the other side of the room recognizing that even at the morning of Christmas Day the visitors were still on their way. They knew they would have an encounter and they moved toward that Holy Family. We might too be still on our way.

The miracles of this season are not limited to the first day of Christmas, so let us join our shepherd and Magi friends and journey to discover anew the wonder of the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes.