

On Mangers and Dragons

Not long ago, one of our families was putting together their home manger scene in preparation for Christmas.

While unpacking the boxes and unwrapping the figurines, the kids started to compete as to where the statues Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus ought to be placed.

At one point, the four year old, frustrated with how it was all going, ran upstairs to his room. Within a few minutes he sauntered down the stairs proudly displaying a large plastic model Tyrannosaurus Rex, what he calls "the dragon."

He promptly places "the dragon" in the manger scene.

"You can't put your "dragon" on the manger!" His older brother scolds, "there were no dinosaurs there!"

The younger brother insists: "But I think it belongs there."

"And why?" his mother asks.

"Well, because...even though the baby is smaller, he's stronger than the "dragon," he replies.

"Even though the baby is smaller, he's stronger than the "dragon."

That goes to the heart of our faith.

As adults the "dragons" we face are not only the ones we hear about on the news. They are usually much closer to home.

-Your "dragon" might be a family that doesn't get along, incessant "huffing and puffing" about something...

-The "dragon" can be that morning dread, the feeling of being overwhelmed by everything.

-The "dragon" is the destructive habit we wish we could overcome.

-Sometimes it's a fear of death or the painful secret we dare not speak.

Little four-year-old Adam is learning that God comes to us so that we can face our dragons, or at least be less afraid of them.

Faith *gives birth* to resilience, strength, courage.

This too is part of the story of Christmas. It is ongoing. It is one in which we all invited to join.

Joining will entail a journey for all of us, just as it did the Magi, the astrologers in this Sunday's gospel (Matthew 2:1-12).

-Like the Magi, we may need to leave what's familiar territory, our "comfort zones," more often than we planned.

-We will likely meet more than one "King Herod" along the way. (There will always be a Herod somewhere trying to thwart our progress!)

-Above all else, we'll need to trust that whenever we strive to live the gospel, no matter how unclear and foggy the road ahead may appear, we ARE headed in the right direction.

May the light of Christ working in and through you equip you to overcome many "dragons" and grant you the wisdom and strength to find your path.

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