



The Tablecloth

A true story

The brand new pastor and his wife, assigned to their first ministry to re-open a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October, excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time for their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc. and on December 18th, they were ahead of schedule and nearly finished. But on December 19th a terrible storm hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st, the pastor went to the church and his heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit. He cleaned up the mess, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, he headed home.

On the way, he noticed that a local shop was having a charity sale, so he stopped and went in. One of the items on sale was a beautiful handmade, ivory coloured tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colours and a cross embroidered right in the centre. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the church. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time, it had started to snow. An older woman, running from the opposite direction, was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next one. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he fetched the ladder to hang the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. He could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

The he noticed the woman walking down the centre aisle, her face white as a sheet.

‘Where did you get that tablecloth?’ she asked

The pastor explained.

The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG, were sewn into it there. They were. These were her initials - she had made this tablecloth 35 years before in Austria.

She explained – before the war she and her husband had lived in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or home again. She insisted that the pastor keep the tablecloth for the church. The pastor drove her home, this being the least he could do.

What a wonderful Christmas Eve service they had – an almost full church and great music and singing. At the end of the service the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door. But an older man continued to sit in the pew staring at the front wall. He asked the pastor where he got the tablecloth, as it was identical to one his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war – how could there be two tablecloths so much alike?

He explained how the Nazis came, and how he forced his wife to flee for safety. He was supposed to follow her, but was arrested and put in prison. He never saw his wife or home again.

The pastor offered to take the old man for a short journey – yes, to the same house where he had taken the old lady 3 days earlier.

And thus he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

Who says God doesn't work in mysterious ways?



Twelfth Night & Epiphany

Twelfth Night is literally the night of January 5 - 6, the eve of the Epiphany, but for centuries it has been taken to mean January 6th, the day when the Christmas decorations are taken down and Christmas comes to an end.

Today there are few ceremonies to mark it, but until the middle of the 19th century, the high point of the occasion was the Twelfth Night cake, an elaborately iced confection which has now been incorporated into the Christmas cake.

The word “**Epiphany**” comes from the Greek and means “a manifestation”. It is the 13th day of Christmas, the day when Christ was shown to the world, represented by the Three Kings.

In the Orthodox Church the Epiphany is a more important feast than the Nativity, and celebrates the Baptism of Christ.