

"WHO STOLE CHRISTMAS?"

DECEMBER, 1968

One of the best books in the Children's Library is by Dr. Seuss. It tells about "Grinch" who tried and almost succeeded in stealing Christmas from his village because so many things about Christmas irritated him.

Dr. Seuss stirred me up to think about some of the ways that we try to steal Christmas away from one another, from our children, from ourselves.

Some people steal Christmas from their children by taking it for granted. Ironically, it is true that a very great fact or gift can be assumed by people with the result that no one shares with the next generation the true riches of the gift so that in spite of its intrinsic worth it begins to have diminishing importance; and finally all we are left with are the outward lingering signs. Each year we who are parents must make the genuine attempt to communicate to our children the true meaning of the Christmas celebration, or like Grinch, we may be stunned on some Christmas Eve with the realization of how great a loss we have suffered. One way to make Christmas meaningful to a family would be to observe Advent, the four Sundays prior to Christmas, as a time for the whole family to prepare for Christmas. (See the attached Advent family worship booklet.) In this way the whole family sets four periods of time aside to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth.

Then there are those who try to steal Christmas the way a modern jewel thief does--he takes the real diamond and in its place he substitutes costume jewelry. Eventually, the deception is exposed but by then the thief has slipped into another country. Every one of us have been deceived from time to time by just such exchanges when it comes to Christmas; when our natural and understandable desire to receive gifts causes us to shift the focus of Christmas toward our own fulfillment or the fulfillment of our own family. The true mystery of God's holy gift of Himself in our behalf is enriched for us in the giving of gifts when the right focus is preserved. A family discussion can help to clear up the focus; another help is to decide upon some concrete needs beyond the home itself where your family can give of itself as a part of Advent. It is amazing how a few outward projects will make the family circle gifts that much more wonderful and will keep Grinch away.

The end of Dr. Seuss' story is happy because Grinch discovers that try as he might, he is no match for the inner power and truth of Christmas so in the end he and his fake reindeer Max who had tried to spoil it all are themselves drawn in by the goodness and joy of this celebration that rightfully means so much to us all.

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