

Welcoming the Guest

By Edgar Solís

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Journalist Rachel Shapiro, contributor to the Animal Channel, reported that some years ago on a cold December day, a homeless German Shepherd puppy desperately searched for somewhere to sleep. The little puppy was all alone in the world, and all he wanted was a safe and warm place to spend the night. When he came across a Nativity display, it must have seemed like a miracle to him. The puppy laid down and went to sleep. The next morning, residents of Santa Catarina, Brazil were shocked when they saw the tiny puppy lying next to Baby Jesus in his manger. A crowd of people gathered around the German Shepherd. He looked surprised to see all the people watching him, but he didn't move from his spot. The bystanders shot a few photos of the puppy curled up in the manger, trying to keep warm. The photos quickly went viral, and since then, they've circulated almost every year during the holiday season. The photos are so popular because they tell the perfect Christmas story. When the residents of Santa Catarina saw the puppy sleeping in their Nativity scene, they didn't yell at him or chase him away. They showed compassion to the sweet animal. Since the photos first went viral, people have been trying to find out what happened to the puppy. While no one knows for sure where he went, most people think that someone in Santa Catarina adopted the little puppy and welcomed him into their home. The town of Santa Catarina showed true Christmas spirit when they opened their hearts and their town to a homeless puppy that had nowhere else to go. This wonderful Christmas story is going to continue delighting people for years to come!

But the lesson here is deeper. We are celebrating Jesus' arrival into the world; we welcome God made flesh into the world, it is crucial to follow Jesus' example of humbleness.

What a feeling of celebration, what a joy that all this anticipation has come to fruition. True, there will always be questions about whether anything will change in the world around us because of this event. Transformation always takes longer than we think it should. And it often begins with something small, a new vision, a stronger hope, a baby in a manger. Something small that will change everything.

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior by remembering, singing and giving, let's also remember that Christmas means love, grace and compassion for everyone and that Christmas is a great opportunity to show what we have in our heart, Jesus.

Just as that little puppy found a place in the manger in Brazil and all the people were moved to compassion, we are called to celebrate Christmas by opening our hearts and sharing love with those who are suffering in the world.

May we celebrate Christmas with joy and may we express this joy in a powerful and compassionate way. May we welcome Jesus and all those in need. Amen!