

A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS

2009

*A Poetic Homily for Christmas*

Twas the night before Christmas  
Two Thousand and Nine.  
Not a creature was stirring,  
I was standing in line.

I'm a last-minute shopper,  
And so there I was  
In the check-out at Wal-Mart  
When I felt a great buzz...

My cell phone, now hung  
By my belt with some care,  
Urgently asked me  
To answer it there.

The line wasn't moving,  
So I picked up the phone.  
My wife called and said,  
"Well, I'm here all alone."

"The children are sleeping,  
All tucked in their beds,  
While visions of Zhu Zhu pets  
Dance in their heads."

Since I was still out  
My wife wasn't shy  
To add to our list  
Of stuff we should buy.

So with a chuckle and sigh  
I finished more shopping,  
Checked out and drove home  
Without even stopping.

I got just in the house  
When I heard such a clatter,  
I ran to the front door  
To see what was the matter!

Away down the porch stairs  
I flew like a flash,  
But I slipped on the ice  
And fell down with a crash!  
When what to my wondering  
Eyes did appear  
But a miniature sleigh and  
Eight tiny reindeer!

They were scrunched in the back  
Of a small SUV,  
And Santa in front  
With a small Christmas tree.

It was perched on the dashboard  
And made quite a sight  
With ornaments, garland,  
And plenty of lights.

Santa pulled to the curb  
And got out of the truck.  
He noticed my stare  
And said, "I had some good luck."

"The old sleigh was too heavy  
And became quite a junker  
So I traded it in  
When they had 'Cash for Clunkers.'"

"Can you give me a hand?"  
He asked as he gathered our stuff  
"I've got a large sack  
But it won't be enough."

So I helped the saint out  
And we brought the gifts in.  
To be blessed with so many  
Almost felt like a sin.

As he dragged in our gifts  
With a grimace and frown,  
He saw our old loveseat  
And asked to sit down.

His tired expression  
Then started to change  
When he saw some fresh cookies  
Cooling off on our range.

So I went to the kitchen  
And fixed him a plate  
With a nice glass of milk.  
He said, "This is great!"

Santa ate the whole platter  
With barely a word,  
Then he sat back in his chair.  
The man barely stirred.

He went strangely silent,  
The jolly old elf.  
His eyes tightly closed,  
He went into himself.

It seemed like forever,  
But the silence soon broke.  
His eyes then grew misty,  
And Santa Claus spoke:

"I don't get it," he said  
As he looked 'round the room,  
"While folks should be happy,  
It's all gloom and doom."

"Folks losing their houses....  
Can't find any work....  
To say, "Merry Christmas!"  
Makes me fell like a jerk."

Barack got the Peace Prize  
While expanding a war  
And Congress' fighting  
Makes everyone sore.

The nations of the world  
All argue and bicker  
While the oceans are rising

Ever quicker and quicker.

“But what worries me most”  
Santa then said to me,  
“Is what I see here...”  
And he glanced toward our tree.

“Does it look fake to you?”  
I asked with concern.  
“We wanted a real one  
But feared it might burn.”

“Is it the garland,” I asked,  
“Too little or too much?  
“Or the ‘Transformers’ Santa  
That sits in our hutch?”

Santa then shook his head.  
“No, look over there.”  
Then he pointed his finger  
Toward the back of a chair.

And there, in a corner,  
Near some gifts for our pet,  
Stood an old family heirloom:  
Our Nativity Set.

It was still in the box,  
Like some garbage we’d tossed.  
An old Christmas orphan  
Forgotten and lost.

“So often I see that,”  
He said with some sadness.  
“And Jesus gets lost  
In this gift-giving madness.”

The stores now gear up  
For the holiday scene  
Within only a day  
After we have Halloween.

“What is Christmas?” he asked.

He then went on to say,  
“It’s a time to give thanks for  
God’s loving way.”

“Long, long ago,  
In a land poor and cold  
Our Savior was born,  
The One promised of old.”

“Emmanuel came,  
A child fragile and poor.  
He was laid in a manger  
In a world so unsure.”

“His mother and father  
Were amazed when they saw  
The shepherds and magi  
Approach him with awe.”

“The angels had told them,  
‘God’s with you, don’t fear!’  
But they’d almost forgotten  
When they found themselves here.”

“The Light of the World  
Thus came to our earth,  
To bring us new life  
Through a new kind of birth.”

“He reached out to sinners,  
The sick and the lost.  
His mission was short.  
He paid quite a cost.”

“He challenged injustice.  
He made the lame walk.  
He fed the five thousand.  
He made the mute talk.

“He taught his disciples  
There’s victory through loss,  
And then...he showed them:  
He died on the cross.”

“That wasn’t the end, though.  
Christ rose from the grave!  
The world that destroyed him  
Was the world he would save.”

“That,” Santa said,  
As he rose from his seat,  
“Is the true meaning of Christmas  
The gift that’s most sweet.”

Then he reached ‘round that chair  
And opened the box,  
That stood there behind it  
Right next to the socks.

He took out the statues,  
The straw and the stable,  
And laid them all out  
On our living room table.

He finished and stepped back.  
Then he knelt down to pray.  
Santa slowly got up  
And went on his way.

But I heard him exclaim  
As he drove out of sight,  
“Merry Christmas to all,  
And to all a good night!”

—*John Celichowski, OFM Cap.*

