



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

A Children's Christmas Story Eve of the Nativity, December 24th, 2011

Once upon a time, long long ago, in the little town of Bethlehem, nestling in the Judean Hills, there lived a little girl called Magdalena. But the name Magdalena was so long and complicated her parents decided to call her Madeline, for short. Madeline was an inquisitive little girl -- always talking nineteen to the dozen. In fact she talked so much that people could hardly get a word in edgewise, which is why most everybody called her "Maddy" -- a shorter, even more convenient name.

Every evening, after Maddy had said "good night, God bless," to her mother and father, she would look out of her bedroom window and say "good night" to the man in the moon and the stars in the sky. Maddy knew there wasn't really a man in the moon, but saying "good night" to an imaginary one was such fun.

One cold and frosty evening in December, when Maddy looked out of the window to say "good night," she saw something very strange. The moon was up in the sky as usual, and so were the stars, but something else was going on up there as well. It looked like a great big crowd of people with wings sprouting from their backs. They seemed to be singing a song to the shepherds on the hills. It must have been a really good song because the

shepherds and their sheep were obviously listening very closely. The sight was so interesting, Maddy just had to open her window to find out what was going on.

As soon as the window was open, Maddy realized a choir of angels was singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men." Then she heard an angel tell the shepherds: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be toward all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David [that's another way of saying Bethlehem] a saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Maddy was so excited, she got out of bed and rushed to the top of the stairs. "Come up here, Mom!" she yelled, "Come and listen to the band of angels sing." Maddy's mommy was not at all pleased. Maddy didn't like being told to go to bed and she often came up with excuses for staying up late. "Stop making up stories, Maddy," said her mommy, "If you don't go straight to bed, you'll be on time out in your room all day tomorrow."

Sadly, Maddy climbed into bed. But the next morning she was up bright and early. Then, after gulping down her "Cheerios" or

whatever folks had for breakfast in those days, she dashed over to the stable behind the village inn – a place she was sure to find a manger.

The stable was absolutely crowded with people. But Maddy being small and very determined, easily wiggled her way to the front. There she saw the manger. Lying on the straw – all wrapped up in swaddling clothes – was the most beautiful baby she had ever seen; a baby even more beautiful than her baby brother.

There two people taking care of him – his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her husband, Joseph. Mary was having difficult time keeping the baby warm. After all, it was a truly cold and frosty morning and the stable was very drafty.

“Hello, little girl,” said Mary, “Have you come to see the baby Jesus?” Maddy nodded her head, and replied: “Oh yes please! That’s if you don’t mind.” Mary beckoned and Maddy quietly crept up to the manger and gazed at the baby. Suddenly, baby Jesus woke up and gave her a smile that warmed up the entire freezing stable.

“It’s a pity it’s so chilly in here,” said Mary, “I’m really frightened he might catch cold. Stables aren’t the ideal place to raise babies. But the town’s so crowded it’s the best room we could find.”

Maddy thought for a moment and said: “Miss Mary I’ve just had an idea. My daddy is a very good carpenter and he’d got lots of timber at home. He could make this stable cozy in a jiffy.”

“What a wonderful idea!” exclaimed Mary, “Joseph is a carpenter, too, so he’ll be able to help your daddy with the work.”

Maddy rushed off and soon came back with her daddy and a cart full of timber. In no time at all, after a lot of hammering and sawing, the two men had made the stable as cozy as could be.

Joseph was so grateful to Maddy’s daddy, he couldn’t stop shaking his hand. And Mary smiled at Maddy and said: “We need to say thank you to Maddy as well, After all, if she hadn’t paid us a visit, we would never have met her daddy. How can we thank her enough?”

“Well,” said Maddy shyly, “You could let me come and help with the baby Jesus while you are staying here. I know what to do. I’ve got a baby brother.” So it was agreed that Maddy should help with the baby’s bath time every afternoon. After all, it’s not easy to bathe a baby in a stable.

That night as her mommy tucked into bed, Maddy asked her: “Do you think there will be another angel choir up in the sky to night.” Mommy smiled and said: No, I don’t think so. The choir of angels came to announce Jesus’ birth. That’s a very special occasion. But don’t be too disappointed. You’ve got a guardian angel of your very own. You can’t see him, but he’s there keeping watch over you all the time. So don’t forget to say ‘goodnight’ to him.”

THE END