

Christmas for poor children: 1 cup of hot chocolate, 1 raisin bun, 1 plastic truck, 1 sweater.



Please collect Christmas presents.



Christmas Mass December 21st. @ 11am

Canadian Food for Children

La Nourriture du Canada pour les Enfants

1258 Lakeshore Rd. E., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, L5E 1E9

Tel: 905.274.9239 Fax: 905.271.6490

Email: cffc.aasimone@yahoo.ca

JOSLYN

In May, Joselyn Joseph, who was 7 months pregnant, hailed me on the street. She said she needed a place to stay as the family where Joselyn and Joslyn's 5 -year -old daughter had been staying no longer had room. She and the 5-year-old stayed with two other families over the next few days, after which we found a room and I lent her \$10 for a month's rent, as well as enough money to get back in business – she sells cloth on the street—plus enough cash to redeem some household goods she had in hock. A few days later she took in a sick 13-year-old boy she found on the street and I was able to get him into a boy's home run by the Missionaries of Charity brothers.

Shortly before the rent was due again she told me that she didn't want to stay in that room any longer and that she owned an unfinished house, so we went to look at it. It was a 2 room pole house, standing in a pool of water. The roof was pretty good but there was no tin on the walls yet. I agreed to loan her enough money to wall in one room and to purchase a load of gravel to raise the floor above the water level. I visited her two days later and found her already moved in, although the room had no windows, a doorway but no door (it's still that way). She had also taken in a destitute, thin young mother with a very malnourished baby. I took the mother and baby to the children's home run by the Missionaries of Charity sisters and they agreed to care for the baby until it is healthy again. I also loaned the mother enough money to buy a sack of sugar to sell on the streets.

About 8:30 in the evening of July 28 Joselyn came to my room with a pair of shoes she wanted to leave with me (most of her household goods are in hock again) in exchange for 85 cents, which she wanted to leave for her daughter the next day when she went to town to sell cloth. I told her I didn't run a pawnshop, but I finally agreed. She is very persistent (and very shrewd) but it is hard to get angry with her because she laughs a lot and never gets insulting when she's refused. Then she asked for 17 cents to buy something to eat. I refused again, but finally gave in on the condition that she leave immediately; which she did (I had told her that she keeps on saying: "I'm leaving" but never does – much laughter).

At 11:15 p.m. she returned, saying that she was having labor pains and asked me to go with her to the hospital. We walked the 3/4 mile to the hospital stopping frequently for labor pains, arriving there at midnight. The doctor took a few minutes to examine her after which he left. She returned to the waiting room with a lady attendant (not a nurse)

who said the baby would be born about 4:00 a.m. Besides Joslyn, there were 3 other pregnant women, plus the husband of one of them, and myself in the waiting room, which was bare except for some benches and a table. Periodically Joslyn and the other women would moan, shout, sing, pray. They would sit or lay down on the benches or floor, wander out into the open courtyard. The attendant lay down on one of the benches, and told me to lie down on the table, which I did. It was very hot but I soon fell asleep. I had hardly done so when Joslyn woke me up and said she wanted to go home since they weren't doing anything for her (in the country women in labor sit on the floor with their backs against the wall and the midwives squat in front of them, encouraging and massaging them until the baby is born). I ignored her but she returned and asked a few more times (later I learned from the gate-keeper that she would have left if he had unlocked the gate for her).

At 2:30 I awoke. Joslyn was not in the waiting room so I went out into the courtyard. She was about a hundred feet from the waiting room, sitting on the sidewalk, reclining against the low wall of a flower bed. When I reached her she began shouting for someone to hold her. The husband of one of the other pregnant women held her on the one side while I supported her on the other. The attendant appeared, grabbed Joslyn by the arm and tried to haul her to her feet but Joslyn resisted, saying that she couldn't get up or walk. By this time the baby's head was half way out of the birth canal. Very soon the baby's entire head emerged, face downward, turned slowly sideways and the baby slid neatly out onto the sidewalk, where it lay unmoving on its right side. After about a minute the baby began to cry softly but then seemed to fall asleep; no one as yet having laid a hand on it. It looked so peaceful and "at home" lying there on the sidewalk on its side under a full moon. I struck me as being rather fitting – Haitians have so little security they are at home anywhere.

The attendant came with a pair of clamps and scissors. While the cord was being cut Joslyn and the attendant continued the verbal battle they had begun earlier, Joslyn insisting that she wasn't going to pay the hospital a cent because they hadn't done anything for her, the attendant calling her an "old sow". Haitians excel at verbal combat and they don't spare the colorful language.

They become very excited but rarely come to blows and the episodes are usually soon forgotten. After carrying the baby into the delivery room, the attendant returned and she and I lifted Joslyn to her feet and helped her walk. Just before reaching the door to the delivery room the clamp clattered to the floor followed by the placenta and enough blood to leave a large splash of color on the cream-colored floor. Mother and daughter were wheeled into the maternity ward and were soon fast asleep. I then walked home. When I returned about 9:00 a.m., paid the hospital bill (\$7 and I reminded Joslyn that she had said she wasn't going to pay the hospital one cent, but she just laughed). I also loaned Joslyn \$15 for things she needed for herself and the baby, she pressing for all she could get and I pinching every penny. She now owes me about \$170, having made practically no loan payments.

"Robert" (a friend of Dr. Simone's)

The best present we never had

GLADE & MAIL FRID. DEC. 20. 1916.

*One Christmas Eve, in a single gesture that looked like
ruthlessness, our mother taught us an unforgettable lesson.*

BY PAT GOULD

MY mother took away the presents Santa gave us. I was seven years old; my sister was 9. That act had a profound effect on us, then, and still, these many years later. We had been good little girls, had not fought for at least two days, done our chores without grumbling, fed the dog, unasked — in short, everything that Santa required.

It was the dirty Thirties. The Depression was in full swing. We, like the other inhabitants of our Prairie village, were poor, the common denominator that knit the community together. Some had less than others. We were the privileged ones, sheltered, clothed and with a proper lunch to eat at school, instead of the congealed porridge consumed furtively by the less fortunate. We were happy kids, my sister and I, unaware that we were poor.

In retrospect I guess our village was a sad place, with its weather-beaten houses needing paint, its dirt roads, its one general store which was fine as long as you didn't want anything like fresh vegetables or fruit or meat — except bologna. We occupied one of the less forlorn houses while our father, once prosperous, was employed to look after a well-to-do friend's properties in the area.

As the friend's wealth grew, the soup pot, a fixture on our stove, grew larger and its contents thinner. It was not for us. Every day two or three or more fellows, some young, some not-so-young, but all looking shabby and defeated, shuffled up to our door. They passed through our village on their way to someplace else — anyplace, no place, looking for jobs that didn't exist. They lived on rumour and not much else, hopping on and off freight trains as easy as fleas hop on and off a dog. In return for performing some face-saving minor chores — these men had pride, and

pride was all they had — their soup bowl would be filled, along with my mother's homemade bread. My sister and I took these daily visitors for granted.

Christmas time was just as exciting for children as it is now, with one difference. Our expectations were decidedly lower. Santa deposited a few modest gifts, and our stockings were stuffed with treats — mandarin oranges, a candy cane, maybe a tin whistle or puzzles. Enough. We were overjoyed.

For us the highlight of the season was the Christmas Eve party in the Community Hall. That dreary, forbidding building would be transformed into something splendid — at least to our young eyes. Crepe-paper spirals were festooned over the naked rafters, more crepe paper was draped over trestle tables where a feast of casseroles and jelly molds and homemade cookies prepared and served by the local ladies was laid out.

After the meal the concert would begin. The parson recited something, a skit or two would be presented, carols sung. Then the highlight of the evening: Santa arrived to hand out presents (covertly contributed by the parents) to good little boys and girls waiting breathlessly. One by one the children's names were called out, whereupon that child would rush forward to claim a gift.

My sister and I hugged our mystery packages, impatient to open them. Only one more name to be called out. But wait! There seemed to be some confusion. One little boy was crying. His parents were trying to hush him. Another child joined in, to the obvious dismay of those around her. A third lament was added. Clearly, Santa had overlooked these children. The unhappy parents, known to be amongst the poorest in the village had obviously not

Blessed Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin September 24

Émilie Tavernier was born in Montreal in 1800. By the age of 28, she had endured the death of her husband and three children, drawing her closer to Our Lady of Sorrows. Émilie devoted her life to the poor, sick, orphaned and imprisoned, setting up Houses of Providence for their care. With the blessing of Bishop Bourget, she founded the Sisters of Providence in 1843 and became their Superior in 1844. Her last words as she lay dying in 1851 were "humility, simplicity, charity, but above all charity." Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin was beatified in 2001.

contributed their share. They no doubt hoped for a miracle — children on the list who might have been unable to attend, a miscalculation, surplus gifts donated . . . Anything.

My mother led the way. In a clear voice she called out that Santa had made a mistake. The gifts that her two girls were clutching had been meant for someone else. Whereupon she grabbed our precious packages and thrust mine into the hands of the crying child nearest to her, my sister's to the sobbing eight-year-old nearby. Then three more people rose to their feet. Amazingly, their kids too "had got presents not intended for them."

We were shepherded out of the hall before we could find our voices — which we did, if incoherently. My sister and I were inconsolable. We stumbled home through the snow, feet numbed with cold, the hot tears that ran down our cheeks threatening to turn to icicles. Once inside Mother

looking grim, heated milk on the stove while Father struggled with our boots, coats, toques and scarves, unassisted by his now-sullen daughters.

Mugs of hot cocoa were placed in our reluctant hands. Our mother brought forth two candy bars — a rare treat. "Here," she said shortly. "You've got candy bars and cocoa. Those children have nothing." She turned her face away, but not before we saw her tears, which neither of us had seen before.

We drank our cocoa in contemplative silence. Then, my sister, older and wiser, suggested a game of checkers. Later, as we were tucked into our warm double bed, our father kissed each of us. "I'm proud of you," he whispered. "Merry Christmas."

I have never forgotten that night. Our mother gave away our presents. It was the best lesson we ever learned.