

A PREZ RELEASE from AGTS

*Monthly commentary from the President of the
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary*

A Christmas Story December 2003

When we talk about **A Christmas Story** many people think of Ebenezer Scrooge and his encounters with the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. Or on a more recent note we think of the wonderful film that speaks to the nostalgic and hilarious story of Ralphie and his family and their experiences of a Midwest Christmas in the 1940's.

Allow me to offer two names that are part of a Christmas Story that is being told in 2003. These new names conjure up vastly different perceptions, yet speak of the realities of Christmas. The first name connected to Christmas 2003 is Saddam Hussein. His recent capture will certainly go down as among the more humiliating sagas among despots in recent history. Within sight of one of his many ornate palaces he was discovered in a hole in the ground. Power gave way to powerlessness as we saw a military medic telling the great Saddam to.... just say aaaaah! While he seems to be resolved to the inevitable, Saddam still explains his participation and leadership in countless atrocities with clear indication that his actions were justified. The depth of his delusion about his status and position takes your breath away.

The other name that is speaking to us in the Christmas Story 2003 is Essie Mae Washington-Williams. After a lifetime of silence, we now know she is the daughter of the late Senator Strom Thurmond. Here is a story of grace and dignity in a world that offered very little room for her true identity to be known. Yet this is a lady who, despite the political rhetoric and antagonistic efforts of her father, speaks of Strom Thurmond with words of love and respect that seem inconceivable. She tells of the fact that she grew to love her father though she would not and did not feel she could even publicly acknowledge him as her father until after his recent death.

I have been taken by these names in the Christmas Story 2003 to realize one more time both the reason and the consequence of the coming of the Christ child. Saddam represents the self-destructive nature of an addiction to power. Saddam's ruthless pursuit of power and control over a nation has reaped a whirlwind of death, destruction and tragedy. The greatest tragedy is that we see how much one person can impact millions when that pursuit of power becomes pathological.

But in Mother Essie Mae we see the grace of God that transforms the most unjust and dignity depriving situation into a testimony of human compassion that only can be explained by the love initiated by God Himself. The story of Mother Essie Mae has only begun to unfold, but it immediately speaks volumes about countless other people who have not been dealt a fair deal in life. Their only hope has been the grace of the Christmas story that has demonstrated that God knows their address and has spoken most specifically to their needs.

With all due respect to Ebenezer Scrooge and little Ralphie, Christmas 2003 with its characters of Saddam and Mother Essie Mae depicts the reality of the Christmas story afresh.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders. And He will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

Byron D. Klaus, President
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Information on AGTS events for 2004

March 19—Seminary Day at AGTS

Interested in attending AGTS? Check us out on this one-stop invitation to experience AGTS.

March 24-26—Growing and Leading The Large Pentecostal Church, Fort Myers, FL
Hear Dan Betzer, Wayne Blackburn, Lowell Harrup, Barry Meguiar and Maurice Watson speak on elements crucial to the large church moving in the power of the Holy Spirit.

April 12-14—Leadership Roundtable with Dr. Stanley Grenz, Denver, CO

November 8-9—Leadership Roundtable with Dr. Stanley Grenz, Charlotte, NC

For details and registration for these exciting events check out our website www.agts.edu