

FOREVER AND EVER

by Margaret Smith



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Forever and Ever

A traditional pageant with a twist

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATORS

(Two male or female of any age, youth to adult)

READER

(One male or female of any age, youth to adult)

JOSEPH

(One boy)

MARY

(One girl)

SHEPHERDS

(Three children, could have extras)

ANGELS

(Five girls, could have extras)

WISE MEN

(Three boys — additional small boys may be used as attendants)

ANGEL APPARITION

SHEPHERD APPARITION

WISE MAN APPARITION

JOSEPH APPARITION

MARY APPARITION

JESUS APPARITION

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

PRODUCTION NOTES

This is a fairly traditional pageant with a twist: all the traditional characters have a counterpoint Apparition clad all in white who stands alongside them in a Nativity tableau. Each Apparition performs a short monologue that relates attributes of his or her biblical character to our contemporary society. Suggestions for the production are, for the most part, included in the text. The play would be best performed in an auditorium with a stage; production in a chancel could be equally as effective. The length is thirty minutes, but times may vary according to the music selected for use.

Total Suggested Cast

You will need three youth, seven boys, six girls, and six adults (numbers in cast may be modified to fit a group's size). The six adults are the Apparitions and may be composed of two women and four men, each representing one of the major characters in the Nativity. They are the "truth speakers." The suggested casting includes adults and children; however, the production might be composed of all children or all adults.

Costumes

In terms of suggested costuming, characters of the Christmas story should be attired in the traditional biblical dress, including rough garments and staffs for the Shepherds and gold gauzy gowns and wings for the Angels. Costuming for the Apparitions should feature as much white as possible for the clothing and accessories. All six of them should wear white robes. In addition, the Angel Apparition wears feathery wings; the Shepherd Apparition carries a staff that is painted white or wrapped with strips of gauze, adding a burlap belt if desired; the Wise Man Apparition may wear a white crown and a purple belt and carry a fancy box or vase spray-painted white; the Joseph Apparition may carry the tools of a Bethlehem carpenter (spray-painted white, if desired) in his hand, or they may be hung on a rope girdle; the Mary Apparition may wear a blue stole draped around her shoulders; and Jesus may wear a crown of thorns spray-painted white.

Props

Primitive lantern, doll wrapped in a simple white blanket for baby Jesus, fake shepherd campfire (either the plug-in variety or logs arranged with red, yellow, and orange tissue paper “flames”), and gifts resembling gold, frankincense, and myrrh (fancy hinged boxes, vases, jewelry boxes, etc.) in a basket, and optional boxes of equipment and supplies, if including Wise Men Attendants.

Set

At the very least, you will need a manger. You may add a barn-like interior if you wish.

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PRELUDE

Piano or organ medley of Christmas songs

(NARRATORS 1 and 2 and READER rise to speak.)

NARRATOR 1: Forever and ever.

NARRATOR 2: Forever and ever.

NARRATORS 1 and 2: *(Together)* Forever and ever.

NARRATOR 1: Tonight we come to celebrate Christmas, the time denoting the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

NARRATOR 2: We celebrate Christmas every year at this same time. We celebrate at church and in our homes.

NARRATOR 1: And on our streets and in our stores and in our theatres and in our music and in our mailboxes.

NARRATOR 2: We celebrate! We shop, sing, worship, meet, give gifts, and eat all December long.

NARRATOR 1: And then Christmas is gone. It's over. It's back to the old grind. Christmas becomes a memory, a dream, a far-off experience as winter melts into spring, spring warms into summer, and summer drifts into autumn. Christmas is only to be anticipated again much later, when December approaches once more.

NARRATOR 2: For Christians, every day should be Christmas — not just a brief time at the end of a year, but all year long. You see, the manger should be cherished day in and day out for twelve months.

NARRATOR 1: Yes, indeed. Tonight we will celebrate Christmas. We will re-enact the old and beautiful story with angels, shepherds, wise men, Joseph, Mary, and the Baby. But we plan to do more. We plan to tell the story that goes on forever and ever. From the manger, we learn of goodness in the world, the value of humility, the importance of persevering in our search for God, of privilege, and above all, of grace in the form of a Savior for all ages — all found in those traditional figures that make up the Nativity.

NARRATOR 2: Have you heard these words before?

READER: "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree

that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.”

(Luke 2:1, 3-4. The auditorium is in darkness. From the rear, MARY and JOSEPH enter, JOSEPH holding a primitive lantern high to light their way. Both walk slowly, showing their weariness after a long journey. MARY especially is tired, for she is, of course, expecting a child. JOSEPH assists her. They ascend to the stage apron. A spotlight comes up on the two TRAVELERS. They hesitate. MARY stands beside JOSEPH, head down, hands folded, as JOSEPH speaks.)

JOSEPH: I took Mary with me to Bethlehem. We were promised to be married. She was very pregnant, and the baby could come at any time. Now, I'll tell you — I was puzzled about this baby. Mary said the child was God's child. In spite of my confusion, I pledged to care for the woman and the child. I already loved them both. Then — wouldn't you know — Bethlehem was so crowded that there was no room available for us. We had to camp in a barn with the animals. *(Curtain opens slowly, revealing a barn-like interior and manger in very dim light. JOSEPH walks to the manger. MARY speaks to the audience.)*

MARY: In Bethlehem, the time came for my baby to be born. He was born in the hay, and we wrapped him in a cloth I had brought, and we put him in one of the mangers. *(MARY goes to the manger; lights brighten, revealing the Christ child. MARY picks up the infant and holds him close.)* This was God's child. God had sent an angel to tell me that I was pregnant with his Son, and here he was at last! *(She returns the child to the manger, and both JOSEPH and MARY kneel by the manger in adoration. Lights dim and the curtain closes — or, if a curtain is not available, ALL freeze.)*

NARRATOR 2: Meanwhile, the people outside the manger were learning about the miraculous event. *(SHEPHERDS 1-3 enter in darkness on the Stage Right apron*

1 or, if possible, on a little platform adjacent to the stage. In their
2 rough garments, they huddle by a small fire for warmth. Lights
3 come up on the *SHEPHERDS*.)

4 **READER:** “And there were shepherds living out in the fields
5 nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night ... ”
6 *(Luke 2:8). The humblest people on earth were the first*
7 to hear about the King of kings.

8 **SHEPHERD 1:** It’s a beautiful night.

9 **SHEPHERD 2:** Yes. I can see every star in the sky.

10 **SHEPHERD 3:** With their twinkling lights, the stars seem to
11 watch over us and to protect us from harm.

12 **READER:** Angels came to these humble people to tell them
13 about Jesus. *(ANGELS enter on Stage Left apron. Lights up*
14 *on them. The ANGELS are small and large.)*

15 **ANGEL 1:** I am an angel.

16 **ANGEL 2:** I am an angel.

17 **ANGEL 3:** I, too, am an angel.

18 **ANGEL 4:** We have come to tell the shepherds about the birth
19 of baby Jesus.

20 **ANGEL 5:** *(To frightened SHEPHERDS)* Don’t be afraid. I bring
21 you good news of great joy that will be for all the people
22 *(Luke 2:10, author’s paraphrase).*

23 **ANGEL 1:** Today in Bethlehem a Savior has been born to you.
24 He is Christ the Lord *(Luke 2:11, author’s paraphrase).*

25 **ALL ANGELS:** *(Together)* “Glory to God in the highest, and
26 peace on earth to all people” *(Luke 2:14, author’s*
27 *paraphrase).*

28

29 **SONG:** *(Optional)* “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” or “Angels
30 We Have Heard on High” or another appropriate
31 selection, sung by the ANGELS. *(After the song, ANGELS*
32 *1-5 exit.)*

33

34 **SHEPHERD 1:** We are shepherds, just commoners, but we
35 can help tell everyone about this new baby.

36 **SHEPHERD 2:** *(Jumps up.)* I’m going to run to Bethlehem to
37 see the baby!

38 **SHEPHERD 1:** *(To other SHEPHERDS)* Go to all the shepherds

1 and other people you see and tell them what we have
 2 heard. Everyone will be amazed by your news!

3 **SHEPHERD 3:** *(To SHEPHERD 2) You run! Run to Bethlehem!*
 4 *Hurry! (SHEPHERD 2 runs off Stage Left. SHEPHERDS 1*
 5 *and 3 exit Stage Right. Lights dim.)*

6 **READER:** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea,
 7 Kings came from the East. They had heard that a king
 8 of the Jews had been born, and they were anxious to see
 9 him. When King Herod heard about the birth, he asked
 10 the royalty from the East to find the child and tell him
 11 so that he too could go worship the baby. Of course, we
 12 all know that jealous Herod had evil and murderous
 13 plans for this innocent little one. *(From Stage Right, WISE*
 14 *MEN enter with optional ATTENDANTS. All are limping and*
 15 *rubbing their sore rumps. Little ATTENDANTS, if they are*
 16 *included, carry boxes of equipment, supplies, and gifts.)*

17 **WISE MAN 1:** Oh, I am worn out and saddle-sore. We have
 18 been riding camels for days. Next time we set out on an
 19 expedition, I think I'll stay home and study the stars
 20 from my own tent.

21 **WISE MAN 2:** Don't give up yet. That star we've been
 22 following will lead us to the baby King. I know it will.
 23 We have wonderful gifts for him. *(Gestures to basket of*
 24 *gifts.)*

25 **WISE MAN 3:** Thinking of King Herod — the meanest man in
 26 the world — has been driving me wild. He wants us to
 27 find the baby and then tell him where the child is. I
 28 certainly don't trust Herod.

29
 30 **SONG:** *(Optional) "We Three Kings." (WISE MEN pick up their*
 31 *gifts from the basket as they sing the verse naming the gift.*
 32 *Each WISE MAN can sing a verse as a solo, or they may sing*
 33 *all the verses together.)*

34
 35 **WISE MEN 1-3:** *(Singing)* We three kings of Orient are
 36 Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
 37 Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
 38 Following yonder star.

1 Chorus:

2 O star of wonder, star of night,
3 Star with royal beauty bright,
4 Westward leading, still proceeding,
5 Guide us to thy perfect light.
6

7 WISE MAN 1: *(Singing solo)* Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,
8 Gold I bring to crown him again,
9 King forever, ceasing never
10 Over us all to reign.
11

12 *(WISE MEN 1-3 repeat chorus.)*
13

14 WISE MAN 2: *(Singing solo)* Frankincense to offer have I.
15 Incense owns a Deity nigh.
16 Prayer and praising all men raising,
17 Worship him, God on high.
18

19 *(WISE MEN 1-3 repeat chorus.)*
20

21 WISE MAN 3: *(Singing solo)* Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume
22 Breathes a life of gathering gloom.
23 Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding dying,
24 Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.
25

26 *(WISE MEN 1-3 repeat chorus.)*
27

28 WISE MEN 1-3: *(Singing)* Glorious now behold him arise,
29 King and God and sacrifice.
30 Alleluia, alleluia!
31 Sounds through the earth and skies.
32

33 *(WISE MEN 1-3 repeat chorus to conclude the song.)*
34

35 WISE MAN 1: All of you, circle around to throw Herod off our
36 track. I'm going ahead to Bethlehem. You come later.
37 *(Exit. Lights out. The auditorium is in darkness.)*
38

SONG: *(Optional)* “O Little Town of Bethlehem” or another carol by the **CHILDREN’S CHOIR** as a segue into the Nativity tableau. Another choice might be for the congregation to sing the carol. *(Curtain opens slowly to reveal the scene at the end of the song.)*

Nativity Tableau

(The tableau is dimly lighted. MARY and JOSEPH are at the manger with ANGEL 1, SHEPHERD 1, and WISE MAN 1, ALL adoring the Christ child. Another possibility is to include all the players in the scene, but a crowded stage might diminish the effect of the speakers.)

SONG: *(Optional)* “Silent Night” sung by a soprano voice a cappella as the lights slowly brighten on the Nativity from the darkened auditorium.

NARRATOR 1: There they are: an angel, a shepherd, a wise man, and Mary and Joseph. They are always part of the story. But they are there for a reason other than just because they are the traditional characters. What does their presence tell us about observing Christmas all year long? How does their meaning and message help us model ourselves to be Christmas people all of our days? *(Figures in white representing each of the figures of the Nativity — the APPARITIONS — enter slowly, one after another. They move slowly and gracefully. They are “truth speakers” interpreting the characters they symbolize. Each APPARITION wears or carries a symbol of his role. They each stand by the “real” character they speak about. ALL ACTORS are focused on the manger except for each APPARITION as he/she steps forward and talks to the audience.)*

ANGEL APPARITION: *(Stepping forward)* As you can see, I speak for the angels. Angels brought news of the Christ child, and forever and ever they bring us messages from God. They are within us and around us. The beautiful and blessed coincidences of life are often attributed to

angels. Some would say we each have a guardian angel watching over us. Whatever the nature of angels may be, they did not vanish when the manger vanished. They are with us for eternity. We must be sensitive to their coming, for they bring with them each day the sweet breath of heaven. (*ANGEL APPARITION steps back into place.*)

SHEPHERD APPARITION: (*Stepping forward*) The shepherds were the first to hear the news of the Christ child. These rough laborers at the bottom of the social ladder in early Judea show us that from the beginning, the basest and most humble of people were honored. Later on, Jesus told his disciples, “The last will be first, and the first will be last” (*Matthew 20:16*). You see, these “last ones” were the *first* to hear the good news of the birth of Jesus. We must remember forever that God loves all men, of both low and high order. The Nativity reminds us to emulate that unconditional love for others. Each person is God’s beloved child. All people are our brothers and sisters. (*SHEPHERD APPARITION steps back into place.*)

WISE MAN APPARITION: (*Stepping forward*) At first the wealthy man, the king from the East, out riding camels and following stars, seems to have little bearing on the holy occurrences at the manger. But think about it: he is called wise; he is the searcher who never gives up; he perseveres in the face of hardship and rebukes the wicked Herod. He reminds us that when we earnestly and honestly search, we can find the secret of the star, the promise of the true King in the manger. And after Christmas, when we are weary and perhaps lost, we can turn to the searching wise man and, inspired by his example, look for and find our Lord. (*WISE MAN APPARITION steps back into place.*)

JOSEPH APPARITION: (*Stepping forward*) The unsung hero of the Nativity is the faithful and protective Joseph. He knew Mary’s child was not his natural son, but he also knew that the Angel of the Lord had told him to care for

1 this woman and to name the child “Jesus.” Joseph does
2 not figure strongly in the Gospels, but obedience to God
3 in this moment when he could so easily doubt is
4 Joseph’s gift to us — an obedience we must honor
5 always, even when disobedience is easier. Remember
6 the obedient Joseph and follow his example. (*JOSEPH*
7 *APPARITION steps back into place.*)

8 **MARY APPARITION:** (*Stepping forward*) The Bible includes
9 Mary’s self-spoken legacy, “All generations will call me
10 blessed” (*Luke 1:48*). From the cross, Jesus spoke of
11 Mary. To John he said, “Behold your mother.” To be
12 caught between grief and pride is a confusing
13 condition, especially when tragedy unfolds before you.
14 Mary wept for Jesus as he died, yet with great pride,
15 she knew how privileged she was to be his mother.
16 From the pure and blessed Mary, we learn the meaning
17 of “privileged.” We are so privileged in our lives, in our
18 church, and in our faith. Mary was privileged to be
19 Jesus’ mother, and we are privileged that he is our Lord
20 forever and ever. (*MARY APPARITION steps back into*
21 *place.*)

22 **JESUS APPARITION:** (*Stands behind the manger. He lifts the*
23 *baby and holds him high.*) Look at him. So small. So
24 innocent. His beginning was just like each of ours. But
25 he was intended for greater things. The angels say,
26 “Today a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the
27 Lord.” (*Luke 2:11, author’s paraphrase. He places the baby in*
28 *the manger and steps forward to speak to the audience.*) That
29 Child will mature into manhood. He will suffer and be
30 rejected and killed, and on the third day he will be
31 raised to life. He has sacrificed for us. Repentance and
32 forgiveness of sins are preached in his name to all
33 nations. He is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” That
34 message alone tells us of the importance of Christmas.
35 It brings us a joy unparalleled. “Joy to the World”
36 should be our theme song — not just at Christmas, but
37 every day of our lives! (*JESUS APPARITION steps back*
38 *into place.*)



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