

THESE YOUTH HAD NO IDEA HOW MUCH CHEER THEY COULD BRING WITH A FEW SIMPLE SONGS.



THE MAGIC OF *Christmas* *Carols*

A CAROL FOR JOAQUÍN

Caroling isn't much of an Argentine Christmas tradition. In fact, Christmas here is quite different from the traditional snowy scene you might think of. Because we live in the Southern Hemisphere, Christmas always makes *me* think of a large fruit salad!

So when my parents suggested we try caroling as a family, my siblings and I felt a mix of confusion and excitement. We weren't sure of our musical abilities, so we decided to make and bring some cookies to give the people we visited a reason to smile, at least.

A man named Joaquín had been a part of our ward for as long as I could remember. That December he had gotten very sick and could no longer attend sacrament meeting. My dad and brothers were among those who took the sacrament to him in the hospital after church on Sundays.

On the Sunday before Christmas, our whole family jumped into the car to visit Joaquín, hoping we would bring a warm Christmas spirit. When we arrived, the nurse directed us to his bed. He had his scriptures and a hymnal at his bedside, as if he had been expecting us.

He was so obviously happy that we were there, and we all immediately felt such love for him. My brothers prepared, blessed, and passed the sacrament. Before leaving, we sang the beautiful melody in "Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains": "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, goodwill to men" (*Hymns*, no. 212).

Certainly it was peace and goodwill that entered our hearts as he called us "angels" and thanked us for visiting, when all we had wanted was to bring those feelings to him.

Julia G., Buenos Aires, Argentina

THE LAST STOP OF THE NIGHT

It was Christmas Eve, and I did *not* want to be out caroling.

However, my mom thought it would be fun if the family piled into our old car and drove down icy neighborhood roads to sing carols to three widows in our ward, and my dad was happy to support her suggestion.

I felt awkward. Who would want to hear us? I would die of embarrassment if I saw anyone I knew. Grumbling and sulking, I crawled into the back seat with my brother and sister.

The drive to the first apartment was only a few blocks away. Nobody answered. We drove to the second stop. Again, no answer. My spirits began to rise.

As we pulled into the narrow driveway of our last stop, I thought, “Please let no one be home.”

It was now dark outside. As my mother knocked and waited, the front porch remained dark. Good. Soon we would be home, where I could escape into my bedroom.

Suddenly the porch light snapped on and the door opened. I was so embarrassed. I felt certain we had disturbed her.

“Come in, come in,” the small, wiry woman said. She pointed to her old upright piano.

“Do you play?” she asked my mother. “Let’s sing around the piano.”

Her warmth and enthusiasm softened my heart. Maybe she didn’t mind

so much that we were there. We had sung a few songs when she offered us hot chocolate.

“Can you come help?” she asked me. As we entered the kitchen, I was stunned to see a beautiful table set that was delightfully decorated for Christmas. It was so festive! At each place setting was a small, carefully wrapped package.

“Who is this for?” I asked. I knew she lived alone.

“For my neighbors,” she explained. “Every Christmas I invite those like myself—those with no family nearby—over for Christmas breakfast and a little treat.”

The idea exploded in my 13-year-old brain. Admiration filled my stubborn heart. How beautiful this room was. How beautiful this petite older sister was. How beautiful was my mother to bring us here. At last I was happy.

At church the next month this sister thanked us again for visiting. She told us we were the only ones that year who had remembered *her*. A few months later she passed away unexpectedly.

I look back at that Christmas and feel thankful for wonderful parents and for this older sister, each of whom wanted to bring Christmas cheer to others. ■

Brooke K., Utah, USA

