TEACHER: Maria, go to the map and find North America.
MARIA: Here it is.
TEACHER: Correct. Now class, who discovered America?
CLASS: Maria.

TEACHER: John, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?
JOHN: You told me to do it without using the tables.

TEACHER: Glenn, how do you spell “crocodile?”
TEACHER: No, that’s wrong. Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?
DONALD: H 2 O.
TEACHER: What are you talking about?
DONALD: Yesterday you said it’s H to O.

TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn’t have ten years ago.
WINNIE: Me!

TEACHER: Glen, why do you always get so dirty?
GLEN: Well, I’m a lot closer to the ground than you are.

TEACHER: Millie, give me a sentence starting with “I.”
MILLIE: I am.
TEACHER: No, Millie..... Always say, “I am.”
MILLIE: All right... “I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.”

TEACHER: George Washington not only chopped down his father’s cherry tree, but also admitted it.

Now, Louise, do you know why his father didn’t punish him?
LOUIS: Because George still had the axe in his hand.....

TEACHER: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?
SIMON: No sir, I don’t have to, my Mom is a good cook.

TEACHER: Clyde, your composition on “My Dog” is exactly the same as your brother’s. Did you copy his?
CLYDE: No, sir it’s the same dog.

TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?
HAROLD: A teacher.
O
once upon a time there was a man who looked upon Christmas as a lot of harmimg. He wasn’t a Scrooge. He was a kind and decent person, generous to his family, upright in all his dealings with other men. But he didn’t believe all that stuff about Incarnation which churches proclaim at Christmas. And he was too honest to pretend that he did. “I am truly sorry to distress you,” he told his wife, who was a faithful churchgoer. “But I simply cannot understand this claim that God becomes man. It doesn’t make any sense to me.”

On Christmas Eve his wife and children went to church for the midnight service. He declined to accompany them. “I’d rather stay at home. I’ll wait up for you.”

Shortly after his family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window and watched the flurries getting heavier and heavier. “If we must have Christmas,” he thought, “it’s nice to have a white one.” He went back to his chair by the freemade and began to read his newspaper. A few minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound. It was quickly followed by another, then another.

He thought that someone must be throwing snowballs at his house. He jumped up, ran around and waving his arms. They scattered in every direction. “They find me a strange and terrifying creature,” he said to himself; “and I can’t seem to think of any way to let them know they can trust me. If only I could be a bird myself for a few moments, perhaps I could lend them safety.”

Just at that moment the church bells began to ring. He stood silent for a while, listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. Then he sank to his knees in the snow. “Now I do understand,” he whispered. “Now I see why You had to do it.”

The above story is A Christmas Parable, written many years ago by Louis Cassels, a religion editor of United Press International. It is a simple but beautiful way to explain the mystery of Christmas.

Originally I started this particular paragraph by saying that “No human being knows the mind of God.” But that is not accurate. Through Jesus, we do know the mind of God...we know exactly what the Father thinks and exactly what he desires of us. And what the Father wants and desires is not at all onerous or burdensome.

So why is it that we find it so difficult to follow the Gospel, which expresses so clearly what God desires?

This is not a problem restricted to 21st Century people. It goes all the way back to the dawn of salvation history. Time and time and time again, Yahweh offered salvation and freedom to his people. All they had to do was uphold their end of the covenant as manifested in the Commandments and the Law.

Oh...this fidelity would happen for awhile, especially after some disaster. People always “get religion” when their lives and livelihood are threatened. The covenant with Yahweh was renewed many times via Moses and the Prophets, and the people of God said, “Yes, we will keep the covenant!” But it wasn’t long before folks were back to their old ways of worshipping false gods, looking after their own interests, neglecting the less fortunate in their society. It’s happening even now in our world.

So I can see God, sitting on his throne, scratching his head in frustration, and thinking “What do I have to do to get my people to believe in and trust my providential care for them? What can I do that I haven’t already done?”

And that’s why we have the Incarnation. Instead of working through intermediaries, God himself decided to move among the human race in an effort to discover what the problem was.

I bet you know what the problem is! Take a moment now, and think about the Gospels. What is the one saying that Jesus uses the most?

Love one another? Nope. The Kingdom of heaven is with you! Nope. Turn the other cheek? No. Any thing that speaks of fire and punishment? No way.

What Jesus discovered as he moved among us was how deeply afraid we are. So time and again we hear him saying “Do not fear “ or its variation “Do not be afraid.”

We human beings are afraid of our limitations, and because of that are tempted to turn away from God and seize what we want for ourselves. We seek to be like God, powerful and without limitations. But then comes the downfall.

When we realize that we can’t do everything we want to do, we fear our powerlessness. When we realize that we will one day die, we are afraid and fight to delay it as long as we can. When we realize that we are not in control of something or someone, we are afraid of what might happen to us. When we realize there is something we cannot have, we desire it more intensely and fear that someone else might have it. We’re afraid to take risks – both action risks and love risks - because we’re afraid of getting hurt.

Of all these fears, it is the fear of death that is most powerful. We know neither the time nor the manner of our death...talk about the ultimate uncontrollable! Even though we believe in the resurrection, there is still the fear: “What will it be like after I die?” And if there is a judgment, we’re deathly afraid that we will hear the Lord say these words: Depart from me, you evil doers. I don’t know who you are.

Now admittedly, this is not the most cheerful Christmas reflection, but truly, it is at the heart of the Incarnation. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we truly have nothing to fear. Through Jesus we learn how precious and valued we are to our Father. Through Jesus we learn that nothing we do is greater than God’s love for us. Through Jesus we learn of God’s desire that we have life to the full. Through Jesus, we learn how God is able to take all the injuries and pain of our lives and work them out for our good. We hear that God can give meaning, purpose, and significance to everything that happens to us, as individuals and as a community.

And best of all, through Jesus we learn that death will never have the last word. Once the Resurrection takes place, we never again hear Jesus saying, “Do not be afraid.” Instead, we hear him saying “Peace be with you.” We need not fear death because it has been destroyed. It will never have the last word. This is truly great tidings, worthy of countless Gloria’s and Hosannas!!

If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lend them to safety…