

***The Faith Express (by Anthony Pami)***

Certain things are staples around my home at Christmas. One of those is the influx of Holiday Specials on TV. This year, I've been particularly captured by "The Polar Express" and I hope you'd allow yourself to be as well. Sure ... some will cite the presence of Santa Claus as out of bounds for us Christ-followers, but I'm hopeful you'll take a closer and deeper look.

For me, the film is about a journey of faith ..... about a group of kids who, not fully understanding where this particular journey is heading, say YES nonetheless and are open to the experiences they encounter along the way. They don't arrive with any preconceived notions or expectations, but rather are wide open to the LIFE that is before them. Sounds pretty Christian to me.

There's a great scene towards the end of the film where the young boy, selected by Santa Claus to receive the "first gift of Christmas," climbs aboard Santa's sleigh and whispers his request in St. Nick's ear. In response, Santa displays a small bell which can only be heard by those who "BELIEVE" and he bellows out the words "THE FIRST GIFT OF CHRISTMAS." In effect, the little boy asks for FAITH at Christmas. He asks that he would remain open to the possibility of the miraculous throughout his life. Santa holds up the bell and bellows out the words "THE FIRST GIFT OF CHRISTMAS."

How about that ..... faith as "THE FIRST GIFT OF CHRISTMAS." Sounds right to me. At Christmas, God comes down to earth to be WITH US. He gifts us with his presence. In that presence, we are made aware that God loves us. God gives us a great big "I Love You," for Christmas and just maybe, in that LOVE .... we can begin to believe.

During this Christmas season, may you realize that God has gifted YOU with his LOVE and may that cause you to always BELIEVE !

Grace & Peace,

Anthony