

PURE RELIGION

A Bowl of Oatmeal

On the morning before Christmas in 1970, the Welfare Square Bishops' Storehouse received a telephone call. A family in desperate need had just arrived in the city and had moved into a small apartment.

About noontime, I visited the home where the family was staying. The mother and four young children, all under the age of ten, were obviously living in poverty. They were members of the Church but had not been in the city long enough to contact a bishop. She discussed their condition openly and said that they needed food and a few other items. As she talked, it became obvious that the children were not planning to have a Christmas.

That very morning, a generous member of the Church had given me fifty dollars "for someone in need." Because a transient order could provide the family with food and clothing through the storehouse, I felt that the money could be used to provide some kind of a Christmas for the family. I asked the mother what she thought they would like. She said they were prepared to go without, but she did agree that a small Christmas tree would be appreciated.

The little girls responded that they would like a doll or stuffed animal. The little boy, who was about six years of age, simply said, "I would like a bowl of oatmeal."

How hungry he must have been. I told him he would get some good oatmeal and maybe something else too.

Back at the storehouse, a bishop's order was filled to take care of some of the family's immediate needs. I went home and told three of my young children about the needy family. We decided to go shopping together to purchase some toys. My children selected toys for each of the children of the needy family. We also went to a wholesale jewelry store owned by a friend, who gave us a watch and several other inexpensive gifts. Finally we purchased a nice tree and some ornaments. It was a humbling experience for my children who had never before been involved in this sort of Christmas Eve activity.

The four of us drove out to the home of the family. We took in the tree, helped the family set it up, and delivered the food and clothing, making sure that the little boy received a large package of oatmeal. Then we brought in the toys and put them under the tree. The mother was in tears, and her children were overjoyed. The children sang a Christmas song, and we left the happy family with good wishes.

That night as my family gathered around our dinner table laden with good food, we gave thanks that a little boy had received his bowl of oatmeal.

