

**In preparing for Christmas**

**I came across a couple stories**

**The first is about the language God speaks**

**It is the story is of an African boy by the name of Emmanuel**

**Emmanuel wondered what language God spoke**

**And if he would be able to understand if he heard God's voice**

**So he set off on a journey**

**He traveled to every corner of the world**

**He could not come up with a satisfactory answer**

**At last he came to the town of Bethlehem**

**He was tired and tried getting a room**

**But there was none available**

**Going outside to seek shelter**

**He came across a cave**

**But he found this too was occupied**

**A young couple with a new born child in the manger**

**Turning to leave**

**He was surprised to hear the mother call to him**

**Emmanuel, we've been waiting for you**

**He was amazed that she knew his name**

**And even more surprised to hear what came next**

**'For a long time you have been searching the world over**

**To find out what language God speaks**

**Now, your journey is over**

**Tonight you can see with your own eyes the language God speaks**

**He speaks the language of love**

**Expressed in sharing, understanding, mercy and total acceptance**

**God speaks to our hearts in ways that are deeper than words**

**This is expressed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> story**

**A Christmas parable by Louis Cassels**

**You may have heard this or a version of it**

**There was a man who thought Christmas was a bunch of humbug**

**He wasn't a scrooge**

**But a kind and decent man**

**Generous and took good care of his family**

**He just didn't get Christmas**

**The whole business of the Incarnation**

**He just couldn't understand**

**His wife was a faithful churchgoer**

**As she was getting the children ready**

**He told her**

**I am sorry to distress you**

**But I simply cannot understand the claim God became man**

**It makes no sense to me**

**So the wife and kids went off to Midnight Mass**

**Declining to go with them**

**He promised to wait up for them**

**After they left, it began to snow**

**He thought that if they had to have Christmas**

**Might as well be a white Christmas**

**Settling into his chair by the fireplace**

**He was startled to hear thumping at the window**

**Thinking neighbor kids were throwing snowballs**

**He went to the door**

**He found a flock of birds caught by the storm**

**They must have been trying to seek shelter**

**And tried flying through his window**

**He did not know what to do**

**But he had to do something**

**He couldn't let them lie there and freeze**

**Is children had a pony kept in a warm barn**

**If he could get them there they would be safe**

**So he went and opened the barn door**

**Turned on the lights**

**The birds wouldn't budge**

**He tried leading them with bread crumbs**

**They remained flopping helplessly in the snow**

**He tried shooing them in**

**They scattered everywhere except into the warm barn**

**Then he thought**

**These birds see me as a giant, strange, terrifying creature**

**If I could only speak to them**

**If I could become one of them just for a short time**

**I could lead them into the barn**

**To safety**

**Right then, distant church bells began to ring**

**And it hit him**

**Sinking to his knees, he said**

**Now, I do understand**

**Now I see why you had to become man**

**In the Mass for Christmas Day we read St John's Gospel**

***In the beginning was the Word***

***The Word was with God***

***And the Word was God***

**This is the language of God**

**Yes, He will sometimes speak in words we understand**

**But He always speaks in ways that are deeper than words**

**If our hearts are open to His Word**

**Today He speaks to us in a deeper way**

**He speaks in the way of love**

**He speaks as an infant**

**From a stable, lying in a manger**

**We are so often distracted**

**We want to hear God in our language**

**And we can be deaf to His Word in our hearts**

**We can be like those birds**

**Afraid of a God we see as an Other**

**We can be frozen in fear of God as a judge**

**So He comes to us tonight**

**As a God of love and mercy**

**God has spoken**

**The Word has become flesh**

**Let us take a moment and allow this word to sink into our hearts**

**As we conclude with a prayer before the crib**

***May your presence, Prince of peace***

***Bless the world with peace***

***The poor with care and prosperity***

***The despairing with hope and confidence***

***The grieving with comfort and gladness***

***The oppressed with freedom and deliverance***

*The suffering with solace and relief*

*Loving Jesus, you are the only real joy of every human heart*

*Enlighten the eyes of my mind*

*So I can see the hope your presence brings*

*Jesus, I place my trust in you*

Merry Christmas