

How Christmas Began

When Claire Boudreaux Bateman's 2-year-old son, Drew, asked who Santa Claus was, the impromptu story that followed produced a book and an epiphany.

Since the Bateman's family holiday celebrations centered around Jesus and his birthday, Claire tried to answer his question in a way a 2-year-old could understand.

"I talked about Jesus and Santa as little boys like Drew," she explains. "and compared their relationship to Drew and one of his best little buddies."

"The problem with answering his question is that Christmas doesn't really make sense. There really is a missing piece. What on earth does this big jolly fellow have to do with the birth of Jesus?"

Claire's story casts Jesus and Santa as young boys who join on a mission to find out how many people live with Jesus in their hearts. Jesus, thrilled with the list created by Santa, decides to share his birthday with those who share his "special glow." This prompts the two boys to create the biggest birthday party in the world.

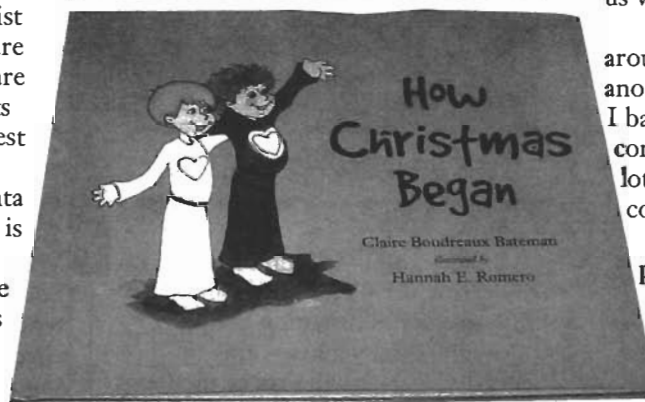
The story explains why Santa is watching people and what he is really looking for ... not the "naughty or nice" but rather the love of Jesus in our hearts. This helps to explain Christmas gifts ... they are really birthday presents. The story climaxes

with this quote:

"The best present was that people started seeing that special part



Claire Boudreaux
Bateman



of Jesus inside each other's hearts. They realized that when someone received a present, that Christ must live inside of them. That's where the word Christmas came from."

Claire developed the story line in November 2002. She did some drawings and held them up when she read her story to Drew's class at St. Aloysius. There was no thought of a book at that time.

"One of the boys asked me, 'Is that your book?' Then, 'Why don't you staple the pages together?' A woman approached me and asked if she could pass the book along to Sister Adelaide at St. Joseph's Academy. She connected me with Hannah Romero, an artist, and we decided to work together. It took another year to put it together.

"I don't like to say I'm a writer or a publisher," Claire adds. "I'm a storyteller, if anything. I never tried to find a publisher. I found Chris Steiner, a graphic designer, and we had our own little team. The three of us worked together.

"When the book got here around Thanksgiving, there was another whole phase of the business. I basically had four weeks. We contacted local outlets and I did a lot of readings. We sold 3,000 copies in four weeks."

It was a lot more than promoting a book to Claire.

"These little people showed me how alive the light of Christ is in them. They're full of that

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spirit. It's great for anyone who is a believer. There's an illustration of what the greatest gift of the day is — that people begin to recognize the light in each other's hearts. We become Santa Claus, not just to bring presents; our job is to find the light of Christ in other people."

"How Christmas Began" is available at Cottonwood Books, Victoria's Toy Station and Paper 'N Things, as well as online at www.cbcdmc.com.