



The Christmas Pony

By Heidi S. Swinton

Young Tommy Monson had always wanted a pony. He often admired his friend Henry's Shetland pony. Wouldn't he love to have one too!

One December, right before Christmas, Tommy's mother took him to the toy department of a store in Salt Lake City. The store was going to give away a Shetland pony! To enter the contest, children had to write a note telling why they wanted the pony for Christmas. Tommy carefully wrote his note and placed it in the large box right next to the live pony in the toy department.

Finally the day came when the winner of the pony was going to be announced. Tommy and his mother waited in the excited crowd. Tommy was sure he would win the pony. He had already made a home for it in his sister's playhouse in the backyard and stacked a pile of hay nearby. But when the name was chosen out of the

box, it wasn't Tommy's name. Another child took the pony home, and Tommy was heartbroken.

As they left the store, Tommy and his mother walked past a man ringing a bell beside a small kettle to collect money for the poor. Tommy's mother stopped and dropped in a big silver coin. Then she asked, "Tommy, do you have any money you would like to give to the poor for Christmas?" Tommy reached in his pocket, pulled out two nickels, and dropped them into the kettle, one after the other. It was all the money he had.

President Monson still remembers that day. "I didn't win the pony," he recalls. "But I received a far greater gift, even 'the smile of God's approval.'" It was a good Christmas after all. ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Adapted from "Let Us Keep Christmas," 2002 Christmas Devotional.

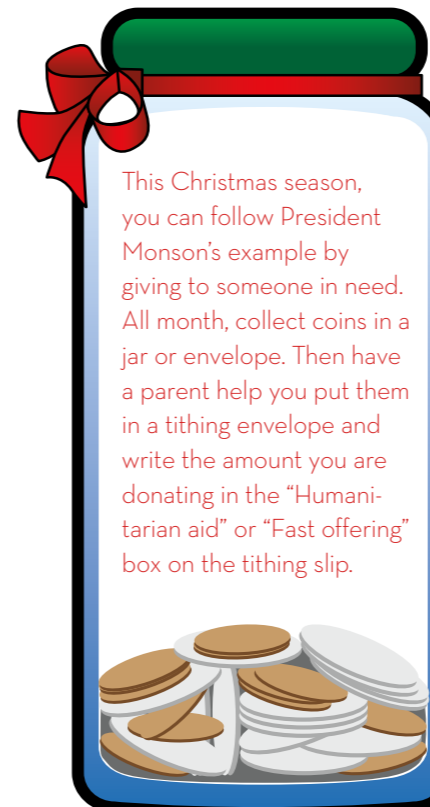


A GOOD CHRISTMAS AFTER ALL

President Monson learned that the secret to having a good Christmas is not in getting a certain present but in doing kind things for others. Here are some things you can do!

- Help clean up after dinner.
- Take cookies to a friend or neighbor.
- Write a letter to a missionary.
- Make someone else's bed.
- Cheer up a friend who's sad.
- Play with a brother or sister, and let them choose the game.

COLLECTING COINS



This Christmas season, you can follow President Monson's example by giving to someone in need. All month, collect coins in a jar or envelope. Then have a parent help you put them in a tithing envelope and write the amount you are donating in the "Humanitarian aid" or "Fast offering" box on the tithing slip.



WORDS FROM PRESIDENT MONSON

"What will you and I give for Christmas this year? Let us in our lives give to our Lord and Savior the gift of gratitude by living His teachings and following in His footsteps. It was said of Him that He 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38). As we do likewise, the Christmas spirit will be ours."

From "What Is Christmas?" *Ensign*, Dec. 1998, 5.

LEFT: ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL MANN; RIGHT: ILLUSTRATION BY JARED BECKSTRAND