The Perfect Tree

By Sydney Squires
Church Magazines
(Based on a true story)

"Jesus, once of humble birth, now in glory comes to earth" (Hymns, no. 196).

"Mama, look at this one!" Joshua pointed to the Christmas tree. It was tall and skinny, with perfect green needles.

Mama paused and looked at the price tag. She shook her head. "No, I don't think so."

Joshua sighed and kept walking. The market was crowded with stalls of food and Christmas trees. It was crowded with families buying trees and ingredients to make delicious treats, like *bûche de Noël* (Yule log dessert). Mama had brought Joshua with her to buy some food, but he couldn't keep his eyes off the Christmas trees. Some of the trees were tall and thin. Others were short and round. Joshua even saw one that was just his height!

Mama said they didn't have a lot of money this year. They probably wouldn't be able to buy a tree. That made Joshua a little sad. Whenever he went to the marketplace with Mama, he kept looking for the perfect Christmas tree. Maybe, just maybe, they could find a tree to take home.

Joshua held Mama's hand as they walked to the next row of trees. Joshua gasped. There it was—the perfect tree!

He ran ahead and put a hand on the tree. It wasn't very green. It was missing clumps of needles. It wasn't too tall. In fact, it was bent far over, like an old man leaning on a cane.

"Mama, it's perfect!" Joshua said. "Can we take it home? Please?"

Mama glanced at the price tag. "Well, it's not too many euros. And I think we can fit it in the car."

Joshua could hardly wait. He kept playing with the sleeves of his coat as he waited for Mama to pay for the tree. Then a nice man helped them place the tree in the car. When they were finally home, his stepbrother, Matthieu, and Papa helped take the tree from the car. They carried the tree inside and set it in the corner of their front room.

"First, we need to do the lights," Matthieu said.

It was hard to hang the lights up since the tree was so bent over. Matthieu put the lights on the top. Joshua put them on the bottom. Next they hung the ornaments. Finally Papa helped Joshua place the star on the top.

Papa plugged in the lights and put an arm around Mama. Joshua smiled at the tree. The tree's lights made the whole room feel warm and cozy. He sat underneath the tree and looked up at the brightly colored ornaments. The tree didn't look as bent over and sad now. It was beautiful. It was perfect.
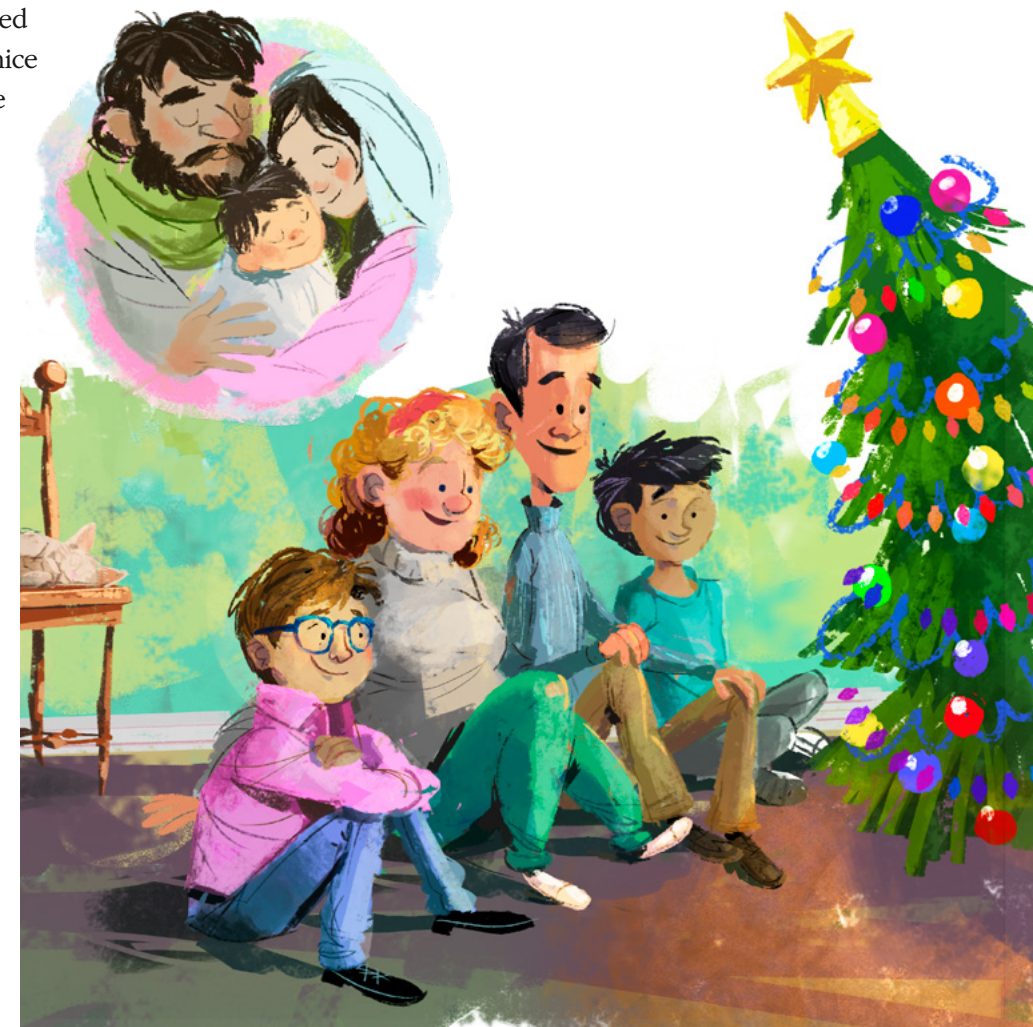
"It's a perfect Jesus tree," Joshua said.

"What do you mean?" Mama asked.

"Our tree is just like Jesus," Joshua said. "Jesus was born in a poor, dirty manger. Our tree was poor and sad in the marketplace. But now the tree is beautiful and grand, just like how Jesus became a beautiful king."

"Our perfect Jesus tree," Papa said. "I love that."

Joshua smiled. This was going to be a very special Christmas. ●

This story took place in France. Turn to page F6 to learn more about that country.