

You know what I asked for at Christmas this year? Socks. I always need socks at Christmas. And I'm very specific about what I want: I want them to be really thick, but soft on the inside next to my feet. They have to have strong toes. Guy's socks are better for this. For some reason they make very dainty women's socks, and they just don't cut it for me. My toes are through the sock after about two wearings. Why do they make socks for men more durable?

I want my socks to be black, so they go with absolutely everything I wear. Boring you say? No—just being practical. I don't want to have to spend time making sure my socks match. I mean really—who has time to make sure that you're wearing the black or the navy blue socks?

After about my third year in a row of asking for socks, my family started to think there must be something wrong with my feet—do I have a weirdly shaped big toe—no—or do I walk funny—ramming my toes through my socks? Well.. I don't think....I... No!

I just like wearing socks with my shoes.

Now there are some who don't wear socks with their shoes—even in winter. Esme says she doesn't. (Not sure I believe that...) It's hard to believe that people without socks go anywhere where it gets “make your bones ache” cold. Or else they don't go on long journeys –or they don't mind blisters.

I do. I want to be able to go anywhere and do anything, when the adventure arises. I don't want to have to go home first and put on my socks.

And I have a confession to make-- I didn't always wear socks. And when I did they weren't thick or rugged. They were dainty-- barely there numbers, with interesting patterns that no one ever saw. But they didn't prevent blisters, they didn't keep my feet warm, and they didn't stand up to adventure.

OK- warning. I'm going all metaphorical here.

Socks are needed for any journey. We all want to be ready for the next adventure don't we?

For adventures we will need good footwear, and socks.

Soldiers will tell you that socks are one of their most important pieces of equipment. Without good, sturdy, dry socks, bad things happen to your feet. When the feet go, you can't keep up. Our feet are our foundation.

So we need a good foundation from the pebbles and the blisters and the cold, and the heat on this earthly journey.

Life is a journey. It twists and turns. Sometimes we get entangled in the briars, sometimes we're too hot, sometimes everything feels cold, lately-with me—it's often foggy. But it's rarely boring.

We begin this journey when we are born—coming into the world as a baby. I got to see a couple of newborn babies this weekend, and maybe you've noticed: babies still seem to have wonder and starlight in their gaze. Like they're remembering where they came from.

Jesus was born into this world in the same way we all were: born of a woman. But there was a difference, too. We put it this way: the Word became flesh.

That's an amazing statement.

God—the vastness of stardust and light and everything that is—decided to become one of us. The being that created the universes and everything we see, and even the things we don't see—decided to step out onto the road of humankind, bound by chronological time, as we are—traveling moment by moment, one foot in front of the other. God—the being out of which reality itself arises-- became flesh – human-- and lived among us.

Why? Perhaps to understand our lives, to live with our limits, to show us what was possible in our lives. To tell us that God wasn't distant, but with us

and within us... To demonstrate what living without fear looked like. To show us our potential. To show us what love looks like, and – more importantly—what love ACTS like.

God journeyed to us when he was made flesh in Bethlehem, he journeyed with the Magi, and now God journeys forward with us. Now it's our opportunity to step out on the road and get swept away into real life adventure—some good, some dangerous, some liberating, some filled with anguish.

And what is the purpose of all this adventure?

Well, what do you think this adventure is all about?

Maybe it's to learn more about our Creator and the Creation, to learn more about each other, to learn more about ourselves. Maybe we can discover how to live without fear, how to love without boundaries, how to embrace our unique gifts. But how?

Well, it's like the baby, Jesus. Mary didn't know everything there was to know about her child at the beginning. But after she'd spent some time with him, got to know him a little better-- the trial and error of the first time parent-- she learned when he was hungry and when he was uncomfortable, and when he needed strong loving arms around him. She discovered his likes and dislikes, she felt his love for her as she poured out her own love to him—and the adventure with this brand new life got easier. No one can celebrate a birth and just walk away. All new things, new journeys take time.

I will confess that my own attempts to discern God's will for my journey are often far more like trying to comfort a crying baby—trying one thing and then another until something works-- than seeing a bright star that I know I must follow. But that's ok. Following gets easier with practice.

Journeys require more than pretty patterns and thin skins—like my socks from years ago--they require tougher fibers and thicker skins so that we can always be ready for the adventure—no matter where it takes us, no matter what the terrain.

This baby, this “Word made Flesh” knows intimately what that journey is like, because he took it. Now the journey is ours, and Christ journeys with us. Jesus is with us as we try one path and then another. He’s with us when our metaphorical feet are tired, or cold or blistered. Jesus’ there, supporting us, like a good pair of socks, thick and soft and ready for any road change, any open door.

The child is born, shining with light, ready to lead. We can’t walk away. We walk forward. Don’t forget your socks.

Amen.