

fishwives, for the washerwomen, and for all the young and old poor women working in those parts.)

"I am going to the hospital," the young woman said. "I do hope they will take me with my child. My husband is at sea and I have been expecting him these last three months." Just as I am expecting my son, the shoemaker thought.

"He did not come back and now I have no money left and I am ill. So I have to go to the hospital."

"Poor woman!" the old man said, feeling sorry for her. "No doubt you would like to eat some bread while warming yourself. . . No? . . . Then at least a cup of milk for the little one. Look, here is mine. I have not touched it yet. Get warm and give the little one to me. I had them myself, years ago. I know how to handle them. Yours looks fine. What! You did not give him shoes to wear?"

"I do not have any," the poor woman sighed.

"Wait. I have a pair that will fit."

And with the mother protesting and thanking him, the old workman took the shoes (the ones he had been looking at the night before) and put them on the child's feet. They were a perfect fit.

Martin, however, could not refrain from sighing to himself at parting with his masterpiece. The shoes had been such a treasure to him during his life.

Well, he said to himself, *they are no use to me any more now*. And he went back to the window. He looked so intently that the young woman was surprised.

"What are you looking at?" she asked.

"I am expecting my Master," Martin answered.

The young woman did not understand, or acted as if she did not.

"Do you know the Lord Jesus?" he asked her.

"Certainly," she replied, making the sign of the cross. "It is not so very long ago that I learned my catechism."

"I am waiting for Him," the old man replied.

"And do you think He will pass here?"

"He told me He would."

"Impossible! Oh, how I would love to stay with you to see Him if that is true—but you must be mistaken. I must be going, in order to be admitted to the hospital."

"Can you read?" the shoemaker asked.

"Yes."

"Well, take this little book," he answered and put a Gospel portion

into her hand. "Read it carefully. It will not be the same as seeing Him, but nearly the same and perhaps you will see Him later."

The young woman took the book a little doubtfully. She went away thanking him, and the old man took his place at the window again.

Hour after hour passed; passerby after passerby came and went. The small stove continued to roar and Martin in his chair continued to look at the street.

The Master did not appear.

He had seen a young priest passing by, fairhaired, with blue eyes, just as Christ is shown in the paintings at the church. But just when he went past his house, the priest murmured: "*Mea*



*culpa* [my fault]. Certainly Christ would not have accused Himself like this. It could not be Him.

The young people, the old people, the sailors, the workmen, the housewives, the great ladies—all of these passed. Quite a number of beggars asked the good man for alms; his kind face seemed to promise something to them. They were not disappointed.

But the Master did not appear.

His eyes were tired; his heart failed him. The days are short in December. The shadows had already lengthened on the square and the lamplighter appeared in the distance. The windows

of the houses opposite began to sparkle joyfully and the smell of turkey, the traditional dinner of the Marseilles people, came from all kitchens.

But the Master did not appear.

At last, evening fell and the fog came. It was useless to stay at the window any longer. The few passersby who were left disappeared in the fog without anybody being able to see their faces. The old man went sadly to his stove and began to prepare his simple supper.

"It was a dream," he murmured.

"But still I did hope."

After finishing his meal, he opened his Book and wanted to begin reading. But his sadness prevented him from doing so.

"He did not come!" he repeated over and over again.

Suddenly the room was full of a supernatural light and without the door having been opened, the narrow room was full of people. The sweeper was there. The young woman with her child was there—and all said to the old man:

"Didn't you see Me?"

Behind them came the beggars to whom he had given alms, the neighbors to whom he had said a kind word, the children at whom he had smiled. And each one asked in turn:

"Didn't you see Me?"

"But who are you?" the shoemaker said to all of them.

Then the little child in the young woman's arms bent toward the old man's Book and with his finger pointed at the passage where he had opened it:

*I was hungry and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger and ye took Me in. . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me. Whosoever receiveth one of these little ones, receiveth Me. □*



Born in 1892, the late Corrie ten Boom grew up in the Netherlands. During World War II, she and her family were imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp for helping Jews. Until her death in 1983

at the age of 91, Corrie ten Boom authored several books, including *The Hiding Place*. This article is excerpted from *Christmas Memories*, copyright © 1976 by Corrie ten Boom. Published by Fleming H. Revell Company. Used by permission.