

Grace Notes

"God's grace for everyday living"

Can't take many more Christmas surprises

By: Debora M. Coty

Surprises make me nervous. With my track record of shall we say, *unforeseen fiascos* over the last few Christmases, I'd rather be preplanned, prepaid, and prepared.

We've had our share of typical unpleasant un-presents - blenders that wouldn't, polka dotted ties, chartreuse ear muffs - but the most memorable surprise was the year our cat exploded on Christmas Eve (don't worry, this story has a happy ending).

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse...which is why the muffled boom awakened me just after midnight. I sat straight up in bed, my sluggish brain a tangle of confused thoughts. *Was that really a noise, or did I dream it? Did Santa land on the roof?*

My husband, Chuck, who was assembling Christmas toys in the living room, opened the bedroom door just as a wave of horrific odor simultaneously slapped us.

"Good heavens, what in the WORLD is that stench?" I asked, jolted fully awake.

"I don't know," Chuck answered. "I thought I heard something strange in here. I figured either you fell out of bed or a reindeer put a hoof through the ceiling."

"There's something moving in the closet," I whispered, slipping out of my warm, cozy bed to bravely face the mysterious monster that was no doubt crouched to leap out and utterly destroy us. It had to be the creature of the black lagoon to reek like that.

As Chuck and I cautiously crept into the walk-in closet, with only the pale glow of my nightlight illuminating the blackness, we struggled to decipher what our unbelieving eyes were seeing. A thick, dark substance like chocolate pudding splattered Chuck's hanging shirts and covered my shoes. The offensive goo was dripping off the walls and pooling on the carpet.

"What is this stuff? It smells like somebody blew up a truckload of rotten eggs in here," Chuck groaned, looking around in disgust.

"I think somebody *did*



blow up," I replied, staring in horror at the ball of feline fur at my feet. Our cat had been acting peculiar for the past week and amidst the hectic Christmas preparations, there had been no time to take her to the vet.

Our snowy white cat, now mostly brown and sticky, sported a gaping hole in her side like a newly-erupted volcano. She looked up at me with a relieved kitty expression on her face, as if to say, "Ahhh...do I feel better!" She purred contentedly as I tried to find a clean spot on her head to scratch.

Instead of worshipfully thanking our Creator for the gift of His son, the wee hours of Christmas morning found us cleaning, scouring, and disinfecting His creation. The creature (cat) fully recovered from the internal abscess that created mounting pressure until it burst forth like a cannon firing.

As I scrubbed the closet on all fours, I couldn't help but draw parallels with 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If anyone

is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (NIV). When we become new creatures in Christ, we expel the old, festering, vile sin in our lives and we start over fresh...like Kitty, who was practically dancing on tippy-paw in relief and freedom after her physical nastiness was expelled. The *only* way to experience that kind of new spiritual life is through faith in Christ.

So this Christmas, if you haven't yet received the gift of salvation your heavenly father offers through His son, consider that you may be walking around with a putrid, infected heart inside of you. The Great Healer can excise that and replace it with a bigger, greater, more joy-filled heart than you have ever known.

And you won't even have to scrape the blobs of alien pudding off your walls afterwards!