

## **Wee Waif Wanna**

In my hometown, New Sharon, Iowa, there was a little girl named Wanna. Wanna was a foundling, as it was called in those days – she was an orphan, and moved between a number of foster parents in the community. Wanna was a tiny little thing with glasses that were frequently fogged up, giving her the appearance of having no pupils. She also had curly red hair and like to sing. Folk referred to her as Wee Waif Wanna.

It was Wanna's dream to be part of a family she could call her own, a pretty common dream for waifs, foundlings, or orphans. She wanted to belong, to be cared for, to be loved. She was pretty much like everybody.

Also in town was a fella named Poppa Peacedollars. Poppa Peacedollars was a fella of huge stature even though he was not very tall. Poppa Peacedollars was huge in heart, mind and spirit. Practically everybody like Poppa Peacedollars and his larger than life, life.

One day Poppa Peacedollars spied Wanna singing at the Christmas concert of the grade school. Wanna just sang her heart out and in the process grabbed Poppa Peacedollars big heart as well. Poppa Peacedollars happened to get in a conversation with Wanna's foster parents following the concert. He praised her singing, they said they found it bothersome and annoying. He commented on liking her red hair and they said it was unruly and a pain to keep combed. It became pretty clear that her foster family just didn't want Wanna very bad, just liked the fee they got for fostering. So, Poppa Peacedollars bought her.

He went through the proper channels of course, and Wanna came to live with Poppa Peacedollars and his equally big-hearted wife, Momma Peacedollars.

Poppa and Momma Peacedollars just loved Wanna and enjoyed having her with them. Wanna loved them back with her whole heart. And so it came to pass that Wanna got her dream. She was adopted by Poppa and Momma Bigdoes. And there in the Peacedollars family she belonged, was cared for and was loved. Poppa also got her new glasses that didn't fog over and you could see her pretty blue eyes.

And that's the way it is in my hometown where folk are pretty much like folk everywhere else

My apologies to Harold Gray; he is the creator of Little Orphan Annie on whom my hometown story today is based.

Did you know that cartoon ran from 1924 to 2010? How about this, Little Orphan Annie was originally Little Orphan Otto; she became his symbol or female empowerment. Nowadays, we think of the musical about her that began in 1977.

So, why am I going on about Little Orphan Annie. The doctrine of adoption has long been one of the major theological teachings in Christianity. These are attested to in today's scripture readings: "*He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ,*" from Paul's letters to his friends in Ephesus. And then in today's gospel lesson, "*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become the children of God.*"

Part of the heritage of our Christian belief is that we are the adopted children of God made possible by our elder brother, Jesus of Nazareth.

I remember as a child, when I would be perturbed by my parents, I would think, "I must be adopted, I can't be these clowns' kid." And I'm sure from time to time they thought similar thoughts, "How can this weird kid of come from us."

Anyway, I have often thought of how special it is to be adopted; a child, chosen by parents among other children to be their child. Adopted children seem special and this shows us how special we are to God.

As Paul writes that before the foundations of the world, before God created anything, God decided we would be God's children through the one who created the world, Jesus the Christ. Now that is special.

Today we have entered a new year. That past year has been filled with problems and a lot of us are very glad to put it behind us. But what will 2022 hold for us? The same great issues still confront us, the Covid pandemic and the Climate Crisis and the like. But in 2022 Jesus is still Lord. He is the light that came into the world and as John said, "*The light (Jesus) shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*"

We all want to be cared for, to belong to family, to be loved. And we are. We are part of the adopted family of God; loved unconditionally.

As the children of God, it is our job to include others and see them as family. We are to love others unconditionally as we have been loved unconditionally.

Sounds like a good New Year's resolution to me. Amen. Let it be.