

The boy lifted his hand toward the smiling children;  
then the animal hurried away with him  
out through the open vestibule.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN



*“Mark this:  
Unless you accept God’s kingdom  
in the simplicity of a child,  
you’ll never get in.”*

THE MESSAGE

LITERARY PORTALS TO PRAYER™

# HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

ILLUMINATED BY

THE MESSAGE®

COMPILED AND INTRODUCED BY

MARY K. DOYLE



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IN MEMORY OF

my mother, Patricia M. Doyle,  
and all those who read stories  
of faith and promise to our world's children.



She had, however, almost reached the end of her labors; only one shirt of mail was wanting, but again she had no more flax and not a single nettle. Once more, for the last time, she must go to the churchyard to pluck a few handfuls. She thought with dread of the solitary walk and the horrible ghouls; but her will was as strong as her trust in God.



THE WILD SWANS

## A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER



Prayer is sometimes difficult. Perhaps we need spiritual inspiration. Something to reignite our spiritual life. A way to initiate a new and fruitful spiritual direction.

Great literature can do these things: inspire, ignite, and initiate.

Which is why ACTA Publications is publishing a series of “Literary Portals to Prayer.” The idea is simple: take insightful passages from great authors whose work has stood the test of time and illuminate each selection with a well-chosen quotation from the Bible on the same theme.

To do this, we use a relatively new translation by Eugene Peterson called *The Message: Catholic/Ecumenical Edition*. It is a fresh, compelling, challenging, and faith-filled translation of the Scriptures from ancient languages into contemporary American English that sounds as if it was written yesterday. *The Message* may be new to you, or you may already know it well, but see if it doesn’t illuminate these writings of Hans Christian Andersen in delightful ways.

We publish the books in this series in a size that can easily fit in pocket or purse and find a spot on kitchen table, bed stand, work bench, study desk, or exercise machine. We also publish each title in an enhanced-size for both public and private use. These books are meant to be used in a variety of ways. And we feature a variety of authors so you can find the one or ones that can kick-start your prayer life.

So enjoy these portals to prayer by Hans Christian

Andersen illuminated by *The Message*. And look for others in this series, including Louisa May Alcott, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, William Shakespeare, Herman Melville, and others. Consider them, if you will, literary lectio divina.

Gregory F. Augustine Pierce  
President and Publisher  
ACTA Publications

## INTRODUCTION



The tiny and compassionate Thumbelina. The arrogant and proud Emperor and His New Clothes. The loneliness and humility of The Ugly Duckling.

My mother read these stories to me when I was a child from her own childhood book, titled *Andersen's Fairy Tales*. Curled up in her arms, I drifted off into the worlds created by the Dutch Hans Christian Andersen. I heard the song of the Nightingale, cheered for Elise to complete the shirts necessary to change The Wild Swans back into her brothers, and longed to help Gerda find little Kay in The Snow Queen. I admired the courage of the imperfect Steadfast Tin Soldier and his love for the paper lady dancer in her cardboard castle.

Make-believe came to life with characters I could see and hear. Their problems were real to me. Their fears and joys were mine. Hans Christian Andersen created stories my mother and her children, as well as children of all ages, could relate to, and continue to do so for more than a century. Read around the world, these stories have been translated into more than 125 languages.

Although best known for his children's tales, Andersen (1805-1875) also was a playwright, novelist, poet, travel writer and illustrator, singer, and actor. Many believe that he was an illegitimate son of King Christian VIII; however, he was raised in poverty by the father he knew and his mother, an uneducated washwoman. At an early age he was sent to live with an abusive schoolmaster and then out to support himself.

His passion for writing was discouraged by his teachers. It wasn't until several of his works became successful that his confidence grew. One of his greatest joys was meeting Charles Dickens and then visiting his family in their home ten years later. Unfortunately, Dickens ended the friendship after Andersen overstayed his welcome, turning a short visit into five weeks. Andersen never understood why Dickens no longer responded to his letters.

Andersen's awkward search for love and friendship in his own life comes across in many of his tales. The underlying lessons and morals intertwined in his enchanting stories teach about loving one another, right and wrong, and the consequences of bullying, lying, and cheating. He also writes of siblings and friends caring for one another. And many of his characters pray and call on God in their times of need.

Scripture easily compliments such themes. The 1936 edition of my mother's well-loved and well-worn *Andersen's Fairy Tales* disintegrated in my hands as I re-read and copied passages from it for this Literary Portals to Prayer. May you grow in faith and enjoy the lessons in Andersen's stories illuminated by *The Message*.

Mary K. Doyle  
Geneva, Illinois

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN



SELECTIONS FROM

*Thumbelina*

*The Snail and the Rosebush*

*The Steadfast Tin Soldier*

*The Wild Swans*

*The Ugly Duckling*

*A Real Princess*

*The Tinder Box*

*Shepherdess and Chimney Sweep*

*Little Ida's Flowers*

*The Emperor's New Clothes*

*The Snow Queen*

*The Flying Trunk*

*The Fellow Traveler*

*The Nightingale*

*The Beetle*

*Whatever the Old Man Does*

*The Darning Needle*

*Fortune's Overshoes*

*The Bronze Boar*

*The Bell*

FIRST AID

As she did so she was frightened, for it seemed as if something was knocking inside there. It was the bird's heart. He was not dead; he was only numb with the cold. Now he had been warmed, and had come to life again.

In autumn all the swallows fly away to the warm countries; but if one happens to be belated, it gets so cold that it drops down as if dead, lies where it falls, and is covered by the cold snow.

Thumbelina trembled exceedingly, so startled was she; for the bird was large, very large compared with her, who was only an inch in height. But she took courage, laid the cotton closer round the poor Swallow, and brought a leaf that she had used as her own coverlet, and laid it over the bird's head.

The next night she crept out to him again, and now he was alive, but quite weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment and look at Thumbelina, as she stood before him with a bit of decayed wood in her hand, for she had no lantern.

"I thank you, pretty little child," said the sick Swallow; "I have been warmed. Soon my strength will return, and I shall be able to fly about again in the warm sunshine."

"Oh!" she said, "it is so cold outside. It is snowing and freezing. Stay in your warm bed, and I will nurse you."

THUMBELINA



FIRST AID

*“A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’”*

LUKE 10:33-35



GREATER GIFTS, GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES

“No!” said the Rosebush. “I bloomed in gladness, for I could not do otherwise, the sun was so warm and the air so refreshing. I drank of the clear dew, and of the heavy rain; I breathed, I lived! From the ground a strength rose up within me, from above a strength came down to me. I felt a happiness, always new, always great, and therefore I always had to put forth buds and flowers. That was my life. I could not do otherwise!”

“You have led a very easy life,” said the Snail.

“Yes, you are right. Everything was given to me,” said the Rosebush; “but still more was given to you! You are one of those deep, meditative natures, one of the highly gifted that will astonish the world.”

“I have no such design at all,” said the Snail. “The world is nothing to me! I have enough to do with myself, and I have enough in myself.”

“But should not all of us here on earth give to others the best that is in us, bring what we can? Yes, it is true, I have given only roses! But you? You, who received so much, what have you given to the world? What will you give to it?”

THE SNAIL AND THE ROSEBUSH



GREATER GIFTS, GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES

*The Master said, "Let me ask you: Who is the dependable manager, full of common sense, that the master puts in charge of his staff to feed them well and on time? He is a blessed man if when the master shows up he's doing his job. But if he says to himself, 'The master is certainly taking his time,' begins maltreating the servants and maids, throws parties for his friends, and gets drunk, the master will walk in when he least expects it, give him the thrashing of his life, and put him back in the kitchen peeling potatoes.*

*"The servant who knows what his master wants and ignores it, or insolently does whatever he pleases, will be thoroughly thrashed. But if he does a poor job through ignorance, he'll get off with a slap on the hand. Great gifts mean great responsibilities; greater gifts, greater responsibilities!"*

LUKE 12:42-48



THE GIFT OF A HANDICAP

There were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers; they were brothers, for they had all been cast from an old tin spoon. They shouldered their muskets and looked straight before them; and their uniforms were splendid in red and blue. The first thing they heard in the world, when the lid was taken off the box in which they lay, were the words "Tin Soldiers!" shouted by a little boy, as he clapped his hands in glee. The soldiers had been given to him on his birthday, and now he joyfully set them out on the table. Each soldier was exactly like every other, except one, and he had but one leg. He had been cast last of all, and there had not been enough tin to finish him, but he stood as firm on his one leg as the others on their two; and he is the very one that became remarkable.

THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER



THE GIFT OF A HANDICAP

*Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me,*

*My grace is enough; it's all you need.*

*My strength comes into its own in your weakness.*

*Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.*

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10



SALVATION BELONGS TO GOD

The Tin Soldier stood up to his neck in water, the boat sank deeper and deeper, the paper grew more and more limp. Then the water closed over the Soldier's head. He thought of the pretty little Dancer, and that he would never see her again; and in the Soldier's ears rang the song:

Farwell, farewell, thou warrior brave,  
For thou must die this day!

Then the paper boat went to pieces, and the Tin Soldier fell through; but at that moment he was swallowed up by a great fish.

Oh, how dark it was! It was worse even than in the drain; and it was very narrow, too. But the Tin Soldier remained calm, and lay at full length, gripping his musket.

The fish rushed about, making the most fearful movements, and then became quite still. After a long time something suddenly flashed through it like a gleam of lightening. It was now quite light, and a voice exclaimed loudly, "The Tin Soldier!"

The fish had been caught, carried to market, and sold. It had been taken into the kitchen, where the cook had cut it open with a large knife. She seized the Soldier round the body with two fingers, and carried him into the living room. All were anxious to see the remarkable man that had traveled about inside of a fish; but the Tin Soldier was not at all proud.

THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER



SALVATION BELONGS TO GOD

*“Ocean gripped me by the throat.  
The ancient Abyss grabbed me and held tight.  
My head was all tangled in seaweed  
at the bottom of the sea where the mountains take root.  
I was as far down as a body can go,  
and the gates were slamming shut behind me forever—  
Yet you pulled me up from that grave alive,  
O GOD, my God!  
When my life was slipping away,  
I remembered GOD,  
And my prayer got through to you,  
made it all the way to your Holy Temple.  
Those who worship hollow gods, god-frauds,  
walk away from their only true love.  
But I’m worshipping you, GOD,  
calling out in thanksgiving!  
And I’ll do what I promised I’d do!  
Salvation belongs to GOD!”*

*Then GOD spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah on  
the seashore.*

JONAH 2:5-10

