

Sister Valeria Wagner's Fontanini Christmas Figurines Collection



The story of Sister Valeria's collection of Fontanini figurines began when she was stationed at St. Pius X back in the mid 1970's. She and Sister Ann Lohrfink would travel to Lancaster, PA each year in the summer and buy a figurine or two with money saved during the year. Sister Valeria's first Fontanini stable was somehow destroyed but one of the members of the parish bought her the present one. When Sister started to display her collection, one parishioner began giving her a new figurine once a year and some students also added to her collection.

When Sister Valeria moved to Villa Assumpta, she was asked to display her beautiful collection in the Heritage Room. Each year she would carefully place each piece on the table for Sisters and visitors to enjoy.

Sister Valeria died August 20, 2017. Weeks before her death she gave her treasured Fontanini collection to Archives. It is a great honor to be able to display it in her honor this Christmas 2017.

Stories of the Figurines



Moriah Lady with Figs

For generations since their arrival in the Holy Land, Moriah's family had grown figs. They built their home with a center courtyard in which stood the fig tree that started their now substantial family orchard. They were experts at cultivation and it was widely known in Bethlehem that their figs were by far the most delicious. During biblical times, the fig was a staple. It was eaten fresh and used as a seasoning in certain dishes. Perfectly ripened figs would herald the arrival of summer and would be enjoyed straight from the tree. Figs that were not eaten fresh were dried so that they could be enjoyed long after harvest time had passed.

The most recent summer had been very difficult for Moriah's family. Their trees had barely produced enough figs for the family to eat, very few were available to dry and even fewer were on hand to sell. Despite their wealth of experience, they couldn't figure out what had happened and had no idea what they needed to do to ensure the next harvest would be better. Moriah would often sit by the tree in the courtyard and wonder what she could do to make everything better. With a name meaning "God is my teacher," Moriah took comfort in knowing that everything happens for a reason and that she would learn something valuable from this hardship. Moriah's father was less accepting of the situation. He worried constantly and was especially upset at a time when the Census was bringing in throngs of people to Bethlehem who could have purchased his figs, he had none to sell.

That night before going to bed, Moriah saw a brilliant star in the sky. It was one she had never seen before and she hoped that it might be a sign that things were going to get better. The next day she went to the well for water where she met Elisabeth, the Innkeeper's wife. Elisabeth told Moriah that the shepherds had seen angels announcing the Savior had been born, and had been led to the Baby Jesus in the stable behind the Inn. Moriah could hardly believe her ears and she knew that she must go and see the child. She raced home and found her family gathered there considering what to do about the orchard. Moriah shared the news she had heard and insisted the family would go to see this Newborn King. Moriah's father was doubtful. When Moriah was adamant that the family should also bring a gift and suggested that it should be the last of the family's dried figs her father could hardly believe his ears; but he could see the faith in his daughter's eyes.

Moriah's convictions touched her father's heart and he agreed that the family should bring the last of their dried figs to the stable. So Moriah gathered the figs in a basket and she and her family brought them to the Baby Jesus as their gift. The whole family was filled with a joy that they had never known as they returned home. Somehow their worries about the orchard had disappeared when they looked into the eyes of the Baby Jesus. The next morning Moriah woke early and went to the courtyard before anyone else was up. Tears of joy filled her eyes as she gazed upon the family's beloved fig tree now filled with blossoms. She could not believe what had happened and raced to the orchard. There she discovered that those trees were also filled with blossoms. Moriah's father had been rewarded and she raced home to share the good news with her family.

- **Item #:** 54006 (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Centennial Collection**



Cats

“Come here, kitty,” Called Esau. A gray cat totted over to the stable hand and purred loudly as Esau scratched him under the chin. Suddenly the cat spotted a tiny movement under the straw and prepared to pounce. “God catch the mouse!” whispered Esau as the cat’s tail swished back and forth. The other cats joined Esau as he watched their companion’s graceful moves.

These three cats were valuable members of the innkeeper’s staff. Mice and other tiny animals loved to hide in nooks and crannies, waiting for an opportunity to eat the animals’ expensive grain. Cats kept the mice away and made the stable hand’s job a little easier. “Esau, please come out and help our new guests,” called Thaddeus the innkeeper. “They have arrived for the census, and the only place in all of Bethlehem for them to rest is in our stable. Let’s do all we can to make them comfortable.” Reluctantly, Esau left the stable to help the guests with their belongings.

Next a man and woman entered the stable, and Esau led their tired donkey into a corner. The cats edged toward the door, uneasy about the strangers. Esau was their friend, but most other people shooed them away.

“Don’t be afraid, little cats,” coaxed the woman in a soothing voice, “I want to say hello to you.” Her gentle manner attracted the animals and one by one they allowed her to pet them. Esau and the man were spreading a blanket over the straw in the manger. “You will soon have a little baby to look after, said the man as he stroked the brown cat’s head. “I trust you will make him feel as welcome in your home as we are.

- **Item #:** 51518 (5” Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Nativity Collection**



The Story of Papa and Misham

A teary-eyed Misham ran across the field where his father was tending to the flocks. He held a tired and disheveled little lamb. Sobbing, the child fell into his father's arms.

"Misham, what is wrong? Why are you crying?" asked the boy's concerned father.

"Oh Papa, I was in the field over the hill when I heard a noise," replied Misham. "This little lamb was tangled in the bushes. She was bleating and struggling to get out. She was so afraid, Papa, I finally got her untangled. But I am worried that she may be hurt, so I brought her to you."

The man took the little lamb and held her close to him. With expert hands, he gently examined the woolly legs and body. Soothing the frightened animal, he said, "She is not hurt, Misham. What a soft heart you have to care for this little lamb. She is just frightened. But, now that you have rescued her, she is safe.

"Remember when you got lost in the dark and your Mama and I looked for you all night?" his father continued. What did I tell you when I found you?"

"You told me that you would never let anything hurt me, and that God watches over us all when we are in danger," Misham replied.

"Well, it is the same with the sheep," his father said. "Shepherds care for their sheep and protect them from danger. God protects us like we protect our sheep. In the Bible King David wrote, "'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters... I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.'"

"So God protects me like this little lamb:" Misham whispered. Pulling Misham up onto his lap, his father said, "Yes, my son. He is the great Shepherd who shields us all from harm."

Smiling, the father patted his son on the head and handed back the little animal. "This lamb is your responsibility now, Misham. Someday, you will make a great shepherd and a wonderful father. I am so proud to have a son like you." Beaming, Misham ran off to give his new friend some water and tender loving care.

- **Item #:** 65253– 2004 Limited Edition (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Centennial Collection**



(Children) Adah and Jason

For months, Adah had waited for her little brother to be born. When the child finally came, however, he was tiny and frail. Fearing he would not live, her mother and the midwife tended to the infant while Adah was sent to stay with Jason, her cousin, and his parents.

Days passed. Though she and Jason were like brother and sister, playing together and helping with farm chores, Adah was heartbroken. She had been so anxious to play with the new baby in the hammock while her mother tended the house. She began to cry.

“Come on,” Jason urged. Reluctantly, she followed him to the courtyard where the animals were kept. Outside, Jason produced a ball of white fur: it was a baby bunny. Adah’s eyes widened. She reached out to stroke his pink ears as the bunny’s quivering nose sniffed her hand.

“He’s yours,” Jason offered, handing her the furry bundle. The rabbit squirmed at first, and then nestled in the crook of Adah’s neck, his heart beating wildly.

“I will can you Star,” Adah said, as she rubbed his silky coat against her cheek and dried her tears.

“Star!” Jason exclaimed, instantly remembering last night’s sky. “Have you seen the new star in the heavens? My father says the Messiah has come!”

That very night, at Jason’s pleading his father led the two children with Adah holding Star through Bethlehem’s narrow, dusty streets toward a stable behind the inn.

Adah was astounded at what they discovered: a Baby cooing in an animal’s feeding trough! Adah crept closer to the Manger, longing to see the Child’s face. His mother held out her hand, inviting her into the intimate flow of the manger. Shivering with excitement, Adah knelt at the edge of the roughly-hewn, makeshift crib and peered inside. The infant cradled on a mound of straw, was a newborn like her brother, achingly beautiful. She longed to touch Him! Looking up at His mother, her eyes sought permission. When the woman nodded, Adah reached for His tiny, perfect hand, waving vigorously in the night air. Instantly, the tiny Baby latched onto her finger, surprising her with a fierce grip that went straight to her heart. Inside she relaxed in the amazing warmth of His hand as she leaned against His wooded bed, drinking in the heaven of this moment.

Suddenly Adah felt someone kneel beside her. It was her father. He, too, marveled at the Child.

After several minutes, he rose and motioned for her to follow him. “Adah, good news! Ever since that star appeared,” her father began, pointing to the glittering orb directly above them in the night sky, “your brother is full of life! When I came to bring you home, they said I’d find you here.”

Adah leapt into her father’s arms. With the rabbit tucked between them, they made their way home, chattering joyously about her baby brother, the rabbit and the Babe lying in the Manger.

- **Item #:** 54004 (5” Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Centennial Collection**
- Actual dimensions: 3.25"H x 2"W x 1.75"D
- Material(s): virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer



Baby Jesus

The sounds of a newborn baby drifted through the darkness in the town of Bethlehem. This child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lay in the manger of a dark stable. This was a child unlike any other. His name was Jesus.

The night of his birth, Bethlehem was filled with people from all areas of Judea. Caesar Augustus had issued a decree that ordered every citizen must travel to the city of his birth for a census. Joseph took Mary, who was about to have a baby, to Bethlehem. "So it was that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

On the same evening as Jesus' birth shepherds watched their flocks in faraway fields. "And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then an angel said to them, "'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

The shepherds were amazed to see the sky filled with angels singing praises to the Lord, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

The angels finished their song and disappeared, leaving the night sky dark except for a single brilliant star. The shepherds decided to walk to Bethlehem and see the newborn Savior who had been proclaimed by the angels.

Jesus did not appear in the form of a wealthy king or a mighty warrior to save his people from Roman rule. He came quietly in the night as a tiny baby born in a humble stable, soon to grow up and save his people for the kingdom of heaven.

- **Item #:** 57513 (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Centennial Collection**



Paul, Shephard with Sheep

Unlike his brother Gabriel who often daydreamed while tending the sheep, Paul was very focused on his charges. Although his primary duties regarding the sheep were to provide them with water, lead them to food, and protect them from wild animals and thieves, Paul did that and a great deal more for his flock. His sheep were beloved pets each with a name reflective of his or her personality. Serene was named for her calm and gentle nature. Scout was named for his eagerness to explore every new pasture into which Paul led the flock. Tiny earned his moniker due to his small size at birth; but now with time and Paul's devoted care, Tiny's name described the opposite of the hearty sheep

he had become. Paul felt as one with his sheep. He seemed to instinctively know what they needed. On more than one occasion he found himself holding his sling and confirming he had stones at the ready just before a predator would appear on the horizon. Other times he has an inkling to walk in a specific direction only to discover a lush green pasture that would perfectly meet the need of his flock. Gabriel had learned to trust Paul's instincts when it came to the sheep.

One night the sheep seemed somehow restless. Paul and Gabriel had brought their sheep to the sheepfold for the night. One of their fellow shepherds had stretched across the opening in the pen so that no sheep could wander off without waking him. Unsuccessfully, Paul had tried all his tactics to quiet the sheep. He sang to them the familiar songs that had always comforted them. He played peaceful tunes on his flute that in the past would have lulled them to sleep. He talked to them and told them stories that previously would have brought them peace. Yet nothing seemed to work. Gabriel was worried. He couldn't remember a time when Paul was unable to calm the flock. Paul could see the concern in Gabriel's face. "Don't worry brother," said Paul, "Our sheep are very smart. Perhaps they know something we don't. Even though we're safe in the sheepfold, let's stay awake tonight just in case there is a cause for concern. Gabriel agreed and the brothers sat back-to-back so that neither would accidentally drift off to sleep. Gabriel shared tales of his fantastic daydreams and time passed quickly.

Finally at about midnight a quiet stillness came over the flock and even the wind in the trees seemed to fall silent. Suddenly there was a brilliant new star in the heavens that neither Paul nor Gabriel had ever seen before. Almost at the same time the brothers said, "Look!" and simultaneously pointed to the bright star; but before they could talk about it further something even more startling appeared in the sky. It was an angel – even more beautiful and more radiant than the star. The brothers and their shepherd friends were filled with fear and stood motionless. The angel could tell they were terrified and quickly spoke to them saying, "Do not be afraid for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Paul and Gabriel could not believe what they were seeing or hearing. At the very moment when they were certain that nothing more extraordinary could possibly happen, there appeared a multitude of angels praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Paul and Gabriel were filled with wonder. As soon as the angels disappeared, they quickly gathered their sheep and began to journey to Bethlehem. They knew that this was a night filled with astonishing events and that they had to go where the angels directed to see for themselves the Savior of the World.

- **Item #:** 72688 (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Nativity Collection**



Ruth the Backer

Light crept over the horizon as Ruth, her mother and father arose, dressed, and sat down to breakfast. When they had eaten their fill, Ruth jumped up to clear the dishes. "I have a busy day ahead, tending the sheep," Ruth's father remarked.

"And I should visit your sister Rebekah," added her mother. "She may need help with the baby." Ruth nodded, and waved good-bye to her mother and father as they walked out into the sunshine

The young woman turned her attentions to the daily task of baking bread. A special treat would grace their Sabbath table that Night. Kenan, her sister's husband, brought a basket of wheat from his fields the day before, and a fresh made wheat loaf would take the place of their everyday barley bread.

Grain for the day's bread was ground first. As Ruth turned the millstone, she fondly recalled childhood memories of working the mill with Rebekah. One child poured the grain into the center hole as the other turned the heavy millstone. Even now the sisters sometimes shared this task, chatting while grinding enough grain for both families.

Ruth mixed water with a small lump of yesterday's dough for leavening, then added the freshly ground flour and a dash of salt. Kneading dough was hard work: press the dough, push it forward, fold it in half, turn and start over. The rhythm lent itself to a recitation of Ruth's favorite Psalm: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, you are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty; Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain?

When the dough was kneaded to the proper consistency, Ruth learned back to stretch her tired neck and shoulders. The dough was set aside to rise for a few hours. That afternoon, Ruth divided and shaped the risen dough, enough for three loaves.

Rachel, a neighbor, was returning from market just as Ruth placed the last loaf in the oven. A few days before, a woman had given birth to a baby boy in the stable behind Bethlehem's Inn. "How are the mother and child?" Ruth asked Rachel.

"Haven't you met them yet?" asked Rachel. "Perhaps you should stop by the Inn when you go to market. They may be leaving very soon, and that tiny babe will leave an impression on your heart, as he did on mine."

As Ruth's bread turned golden in the oven, she decided to visit the stable and offer one of her loaves to the travelers. "It's only right," she remarked to herself, "that grain given as a gift will become a gift of bread to others."

- **Item #:** 52548 (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Fontanini Heirloom Nativity**



Lighted Standing Campfire

No story card

- **Item #:** 54322 (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Village Collection**



The Donkey

No story card

- **Item #:** 52443 (5" Collections)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Fontanini Heirloom Nativity**



Carlo

A builder by trade, Carlo followed in the footsteps of the family who had come before him. Every street in Bethlehem had something built by his own hands or those of his extended family.

At the time of Jesus homes were made with sun dried mud bricks or roughly quarried stones. Roofs were flat and built from cypress or sycamore beams positioned on top of the walls. Reeds were placed atop the beams and covered by a layer of mud plater and a dry mixture of chalk earth and ash. With each layer, Carlo used a stone roller to compact the materials. To finish the structure, he built low walls as a safety barrier that bordered the roof. Rooftops had served as an extra room for the families that lived beneath them.

Carlo spent much of his time working on rooftops. At the time of the census, he was very busy. Families needed to provide space for visitors. Thaddeus, the Inn Keeper, had called upon Carlo for help with his roof as well. But it wasn't the inns' roof that required Carlo's attention. It was the stables. Somehow a hole had opened that needed immediate attention. When Carlo reached the stable, he found the hole. He quickly made the repair and continued on to his next job. A little while later Thaddeus found Carlo again. "Carlo" he said, "You must return to the stable. The hole has reopened." Carlo couldn't understand what might have happened. He was certain the repair should have held. So Carlo headed back and repaired the opening a second time and then returned to another job. Shortly after that again Thaddeus came to him to ask when Carlo might return to repair the hole. Dumbfounded, Carlo explained that he had indeed made the repair twice already. Thaddeus disagreed and together they went back to the stable. Much to Carlo's surprise the hole had returned. Thaddeus now saw signs of the earlier repairs and he too was perplexed. Carlo and his family had built the Inn and stable. Both structures had withstood the test of time and neither Carlo nor Thaddeus could make sense of things. So Carlo fixed the hole a third time. He used extra materials and this time he was certain the patch would remain. Early in the evening, Thaddeus knocked on Carlo's door. Carlo couldn't believe the patch had failed a third time but he promised to return yet again in the morning. The next day when Carlo arrived he was surprised by crowds of sheep and shepherds. The shepherds told of angels and the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem's stable. Seeing the ladder, one of the shepherds realized why Carlo was there and smiled. The shepherd had wondered about the hole in the roof. It seemed out of place in the sturdy structure but during the night the shepherd saw the light of the Star shining through and resting upon the manger that held Baby Jesus. Now the soft light of dawn gently kissed the face of the Christ Child. Finally, Carlo understood and was amazed when the hole that refused to be repaired finally made sense.

- **Item #:** 57110 (5" Collections) \$24.99 Valley View
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **Building Family Traditions (2013 Limited)**



Mary's Donkey

Mary's donkey was truly an extraordinary animal. He had made the three-day trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem with Mary and Joseph spending most of the journey carrying Mary. When they arrived in Bethlehem and discovered there was no room in the Inn, the weary travelers made their way to the stable. Joseph used the donkey's saddle blanket to make a place for Mary to rest. While Mary and Joseph made the best of their dwelling place, the donkey went to his trough and found it

filled with cool clean water. The donkey drank deeply and then found a soft corner of the stable where he could finally rest. Within moments of falling asleep, the donkey awoke to the bright light of a brilliant star heralding the birth of Baby Jesus. The donkey then heard, "come and rest weary one. We have a long journey to Egypt ahead." With that the donkey found a place near the manger to lie down and sleep near the family who loved him.

- **Item #:** 54020 (5" Collection)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Nativity Collection/Building Family Tradition**

Actual dimensions:

Donkey: 3"H x 4.75"W x 1.25"D

Trough: 1.5"H x 2.25"W x 2"D

Blanket: 3.25"W x 1.75"D



Ephraim Fig Lays on Hay

Ephraim stretched out on the grass, contemplating the sky. Though only 17, he was a self-proclaimed star expert, and spent much of his young life watching the heavens. Even a tiny boy, he made up names and delightful stories about the clusters of stars he saw each night. Each was fanciful, evoking a beautiful picture in his mind of dancing images in a black night filled with a brilliant array of multi-colored lights and shapes.

Ephraim loved to share his sky tales with everyone. He told stories to the neighbors but they were not interested. He tried his parents, but even they thought it very eccentric to name stars and compose stories about them. They regarded Ephraim as a sweet, unreliable dreamer and rarely asked him to do more than tend the flock closest to the family home.

On one cold winter evening, the boy slipped out of the house to enjoy “his” stars before going to sleep. Staring up at the lights scattered across the blue-black heaven, the glorious landscape captured his imagination. Soon, he fell asleep on the hard ground without even a cloak to cover his body

Ephraim didn’t know whether he’d been asleep hours or moments when he was awakened by comforting warmth. Assuming it to be the morning sun, he stretched and opened his eyes only to be confronted by a magnificent star hanging right over his head! Beams of light lit up the land for miles around and he jumped up in a state of fright. His fear did not last long, for the star’s golden glow soothed Ephraim’s spirit. He quickly gave thanks for the phenomenon, just as he had given thanks for every other magical gift his eyes had witnessed. He lay down again to watch the star, lulled back to sleep by its pulsing light.

As dawn approached, Ephraim awoke to the real morning. Hearing sounds of activity in his house; he suddenly remembered the glory of the star and was eager to tell his family.

“I awoke last night to the most wondrous spectacle!” he shouted, startling his parents with his tone and manner. “A star big as the sky, appeared before me...a true miracle.”

“Ah yes. A most wonderful star,” his father nodded solemnly, shaking his head as he did each time the boy told a tale. “Let me guess. This one fell to earth and was made of solid gold. Ephraim, you must stop telling these stories or the neighbors will think all of us are crazy.”

Having heard this reply to his discoveries so many times in the past, the boy didn’t argue. Instead, he smiled.

Then, he tucked his latest treasure into the deepest reaches of his heart and marveled, one more time, at having been chosen from among so many to witness a miracle

- **Item #:** 54033 (5” Collection)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Nativity Collection/Building Family Tradition**

Actual dimensions: 1.5"H x 5.25"W x 2.25"D

Material(s): virtually unbreakable child-friendly polymer



Abner the Story Teller

The campfire burned brightly in the dark night. Abner, a well-liked storyteller and trader by profession, visited with a group of people outside the town of Bethany. The firelight danced off his face and his eyes sparkled with excitement as he told the group what he had seen in the countryside just a few nights before.

"I was on my way back to Bethlehem from selling my wares in the marketplace of Jerusalem. I sold everything... even my cart. So I traveled light, with just a pack on my back and my walking stick. I took a shortcut through the hills, hoping to reach home sooner. The night was black as ink. I came upon a group of shepherds tending their flocks. Just as I was about to greet them, a

bright light erupted in the sky. A brilliant angel appeared to us and said, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

"The shepherds stood in awe and in fear as the sky filled with angels. One of the shepherds cried tears of astonishment. A few others shook in terror. When the angels left, the shepherds decided to pack their belongings and go to find this newborn King."

Abner paused a moment, then continued. "I followed the shepherds to a small stable in Bethlehem. From what I have seen and heard, I firmly believe that our Savior, our Messiah, has arrived in the form of a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The group sat quietly at first, startled and astounded by what they heard. Some wondered if Abner had lost his mind. Others responded with joy, for they had waited for many years to hear this news. Abner raised his hands to the heavens and said, "Thank you, dear Lord that I am living to see this great day. I welcome your Son into our world, and promise to share the news of His birth. I am no longer a mere trader, but a humble servant who will carry His message far and wide."

- **Item #:** 52523 (5" Collection) \$19.50 (#7665104)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
- **The Continental Collection (2004 Special Event Figure)**
- **Gift Accessories include:** campfire

Actual dimensions: 5"H x 3.75"W x 2"D

Material(s): virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer



Daphne the Jeweler

Daphne paced back and forth behind her table filled with sparking jewelry and trinkets. Business was slow, so she picked up a small piece of cloth and stared polishing the jewelry in front of her. She studied the delicate designs, all created by her husband Orion in his blacksmith shop. Daphne admired the way he pounded a heavy mallet to forge a plowshare, and then picked up a tiny hammer to create a perfectly round gold earring.

A little girl lingering near her shop interrupted Daphne's thoughts. "Would you like to try on a bracelet?" Daphne asked, handing the child a thin bronze bangle with a swirling design.

"Oh, it's so pretty!" replied the girl, sliding the too-large bracelet on her arm. "It's as pretty as the one I saw on the king who just arrived."

"Tell me about him!" Daphne said. "I have heard of many amazing events today, but I can't leave the jewelry shop to see for myself."

"The king rides a big white horse with a fancy saddle," the girl said. "He holds a gold box. And he smiles at everyone and keeps asking about a baby born in a stable. Everyone is going there with gifts for the little one."

"The king wants to visit the baby born in Elisabeth's stable. Imagine!" exclaimed Daphne. Just this morning a neighbor told her of a humble man and woman who lodged with the animals behind the Inn, and gave birth to a son in that very place.

"Child, will you do me a favor?" Daphne asked. The little girl nodded.

Daphne picked up a gold necklace studded with tiny pieces of turquoise, rolled it in a piece of fine linen fabric, and handed it to the girl. "Take this necklace to the stable behind the Inn. When you get there, bow very low to the lady and offer her the necklace," said Daphne. The little girl's eyes widened as she clutched the jewelry. "And keep the bracelet, too." Daphne added with a smile. "You will grow into it."

Orion walked up just as the little girl totted away. "Surely that child did not buy a bracelet and my masterpiece necklace?" he asked.

"Of course not!" Daphne replied gently. "As leading citizens of Bethlehem, I decided that our family should give a fitting gift to the new mother at the Inn. As our rabbi would say, 'a good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.'"

"True," Orion replied throwing his strong arm around his wife's shoulders. "I thank God for my wife whose heart is more beautiful than all the jewels on Earth."

- Item #54007 (5" Centennial Collection) \$19.50
 - **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini – Italy
 - **The Fontanini Heirloom Nativity**
 - **Fontanini Collectors' Club**
 - **2003 Members Only**
 - **Nativity Preview Edition**
- Actual dimensions: 5"H x 2"W
Material(s): virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer



Nahome the Shepherdess

Nahome, her husband Timothy, and their sons Micah and Silas were a family of shepherds. While Timothy and Micah care for the sheep, Nahome kept a lovely home for her family, worked with wool and cared for young Silas. Homemaking in biblical Bethlehem was demanding work, but tending to her home and family filled Nahome's heart with joy. One of her many duties was to provide her family with clothing. This process began with wool from sheep.

At the end of the summer and again at the end of the winter, the sheep were washed and sheared. Nahome would begin her work by washing the wool. Several washings with lye soap in a local stream were required to remove the dirt and natural oils in the fibers. Once it was clean, Nahome would comb it to remove the matting, spin it into thread, and then weave it into cloth. After years of practice, Nahome had become an accomplished spinner and weaver. Of all the cloth and clothing Nahome had made, the piece that her most joy was a blanket she made just before Micah was born. She had kept it and wrapped Silas in the same blanket when he was born. Now with her boys growing up, the blanket served as a reminder of the babies Nahome that once held in her arm.

It was only a few short weeks ago that Nahome had helped her husband Timothy prepare for his journey to Bethlehem. Roman authorities had ordered a census that required Timothy to return to his hometown. She had bundled food into a cloth, and as Timothy was about to leave, Nahome thought of the cold and tucked her prized blanket into his sack.

Timothy had returned from Bethlehem with fantastic stories to tell. On his travels he had met a man, Joseph and his wife, Mary, who were also journeying to Bethlehem. Seeing Mary was about to have a baby, Timothy was moved with compassion and gave Nahome's treasured blanket. Later, Timothy heard the news that the Savior had been born and rushed to the stable to see this Newborn King. There he found the Baby Jesus. Awestruck and divinely inspired, Timothy was eager to share this news with his family and rushed home. He shared the story of the Messiah's birth and insisted that his family return with him to Bethlehem to see for themselves the Baby Jesus. There the family stood before the manger with their gifts of a young lamb; but that the moment Nahome gazed upon the newborn, her heart leapt with joy when she had discovered that she had already given Him another gift; the blanket in which Baby Jesus was wrapped was the same blanket that had held her own sons.

- **Item #:** 57520 (5" Centennial Collection) \$19.50
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini - Italy



Aaron the Shepherd

Boys and girls of every time and culture love to pretend. In the Holy Land, children were no different. Outgrown clothing, while scarce, became wonderful costumes for make-believe kings and queens. Small boys made swords from sticks, pretending to be adventurers and warriors, and little girls played mother, sitting for hours by the family hearth where they were often given real grain to grind in preparation for future roles

Aaron's favorite fantasy came from an early experience. He had gone to Jerusalem's Fish Gate with his mother as a very tiny boy. The Gate was her final stop, and by the time they arrived there, she had animal skin bags filled with onions, leeks, garlic and beets from the marketplace. At the Fish Gate, Aaron took a few steps away from his mother, as she bargained for the day's catch, to get a closer look at part of a huge caravan that had just pulled into town.

"What are those?" Aaron asked an old woman squatting on the ground next to the gate. She shielded her eyes from the sun and looked toward the huge beasts laden with decorated blankets and hug with saddlebags filled with provisions.

"Those are called camels, little one," the wrinkled woman finally said, having determined that the dromedaries were the objects of the boy's question. "God's nomads take the camels out into the vast desert," she continued. "They can go for many, many days without water, and yet camels can give milk." "Someday, I will have a big camel," Aaron said wisely, barely able to see the top of their saddles, for he was a tiny boy.

From that day forward Aaron's dream was to have a camel. He often went out to the sheep's pen, chose a small lamb, and pretended to ride into the desert on his sturdy mount, sitting atop a beautifully studded saddle. It was a dream that did not go away. For many years later, Aaron would grow to manhood and find employment with a caravan.

And although he traveled many routes and experienced all of the wonderful sights, sounds and smells of his journeys, Aaron's warmest moments belonged to the past. At night, with soft breezes pushing the flaps of his tent against the night, Aaron's first dream almost always began with colorful images of a small boy and his "wooly" camel.

For the Fontanini (5" Collection) Heirloom Nativity

Item #: 72563

Manufacturer: House Of Fontanini – Italy

Actual Dimensions: 4.25"H x 3"W x 1.5"D

Material(s): virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer



Silas the Young Shepherd Boy

Silas came from a family of shepherds. His father Timothy and his brother Micah tended the flock with his mother Nahome worked with the wool, spinning it into thread, and then weaving it into cloth. Timothy and Micah spent the greater part of the year both day and night outside in all kinds of weather. In the spring, they led the flock to graze on neighboring hills. In the summer, they brought their charges to cooler mountain pastures. When fall and winter approached, they would migrate to lower, warmer coastal plains and valleys. Timothy and Micah were good shepherds and knew each of their sheep by name. They led them to food and water and protected them from the constant dangers of thieves and wild beasts – lions, leopards, and wolves.

Micah wanted with all his heart to be with his father and brother and the flock. Whenever he could, he would spend the day with Timothy and Micah learning all there was to know about being a shepherd. He learned the names of each of the sheep and how to call them so that they would respond. He learned about shearing and how to find lost labs. He learned where to find water and where lush pastures could be found. He also learned how important it was to protect the sheep and how to use a slingshot. The leather sling with a web pocket was used to hurl stones at the animals that threatened the flock. Silas knew from the story of David and Goliath that this was a powerful tool. He practiced placing a stone on the pad, holding the two ends of the string, and swinging it around in a circle. He learned when to let go of one of the strings so that the stone would fly toward the target. He practiced so often that his slingshot was never far from his hand. Silas got his wish to be a full-time shepherd when his father, Timothy, had journeyed to Bethlehem for the census. While Timothy was gone, Silas joined Micah in the fields both day and night. More than once Silas' slingshot practice proved to be worthwhile as he used carefully aimed stones to drive off predators. Late one night while tending the flock, Silas and Micah saw the Star of Bethlehem appear in the sky. Both wondered what this wondrous light might mean, and soon found out when their father returned home with stories of the Savior's birth.

- For the Fontanini (5" Centennial Collection)
- By Roman Inc. Item #57521
- Depicts a shepherd boy, Silas, who had a knack for mischief, but when he found this lamb caught in a thicket of reeds he became a hero and then delightfully held him in his arms
- Actual Dimensions: 4"H x 1.5"W x 1.5"D
- Material(s): Virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer



Miriam the Shepherd (Picture on box is different)

The people of Miriam's clan...and indeed most of theirs...thought the young woman to be strange. Even her parents had long ago given up on any idea of marriage for her. Who would have her?

Miriam was a lovely young maiden, and she cared deeply for the animals belonging to her family ever since she's been old enough to toddle out the family's front door. Playing amid the ducks, geese, chickens and roosters, Miriam hoped this happy time would last forever.

At about the time Miriam should have begun to learn to weave flax, bake bread and press olives; she announced to her family that she wished to become a shepherd. And since the family had no sons, there was no reason why she could not have that job...

"I don't know what I am to do about Miriam," her mother confided to everyone. Her father. Her aunts. The butcher. Even the rabbi, 'Miriam won't learn to sew tunics or to grind millet for our breakfast. She's always running off to the field after her father and sometimes brings home sick animals. Once, she tried to hide a lamb behind the house. The geese went wild and my husband lectured the entire family into the night about Miriam's animals."

Miriam wanted to please her parents. She did everything her mother asked, learning to neighbor say the Sabbath prayers with her head covered and to embroider her sister's skirts. She even made the family's perfumes from gathered wildflowers and olive oil, cooking them perfectly and then cooling the scents down in small clay vials. But her heart was with God's four legged creatures, and her family grew weary of looking for a change.

One day, as the winter solstice approached, Miriam wandered out with her father's herd in the late afternoon. She had just arrived when she caught a glimpse of activity amid the herd. A small lamb had injured his leg and was limping pathetically as the herd pushed the tiny creature away from its midst.

"What happen to you? And where is your mother?" Miriam asked, lifting up the wriggling animal. She examined its leg, tying the extremity with the head cloth she carried in her apron. "I'm taking you home with me now, little one."

Loading the lamb into the big basket she'd brought along, Miriam grabbed a stick from the ground. Her father watched from a distance, shaking his head. She hoped he wouldn't be to mad.

Then, gathering up all of her spirit and courage, Miriam walked toward home with the basket against her back. And as if to say thank you, the lamb nuzzled her ear and slept.

#52572

No card in box

Description taken from website: <http://www.houseoffontanini.com/searchquick-submit.sc?keywords=miriam>



Zoe the Olive Worker

Carrying heavy water buckets, Zoe hurried down the path to her house. Today she would not be baking bread with her mother and aunts, or mending and weaving after she finished with the water. Instead, she would help in the olive grove beyond the wheat fields. For this year's crop had truly been blessed by the Lord! The trees were heavy with olives, and extra help was needed to pick the ripe fruits.

"Are you certain you want to work in the olive groves today, Zoe?" her mother asked. "The work is usually done by men."

"I'm strong from carrying the water each day, from kneading bread and tending the animals. I know I can keep up with the other workers, Mother." Zoe replied with confidence and excitement.

"Then you should be going," said her mother, handing Zoe a sack with some bread and dried figs for her midday meal. "And take your wrap. There's a chill in the air."

Zoe wrapped a shawl around her shoulders and started off across the fields. The autumn morning was cool, but she knew she would warm up quickly as she shook the olives from their gnarled branches, gathering them on the blankets and cloths strewn around the bases of the trees.

As Zoe reached the olive grove, the men were already busily gathering olives. Baskets were quickly filled, then passed to others for loading onto wagons and carts. Donkeys pulled the full carts down the path to a stone olive press, where the olives would be turned into oil. Zoe marveled at the bustling efficiency of the harvest scene.

She began working alongside the others, tapping the tree branches with a long stick, the olives dropping to the ground below. She was careful not to step on the fruit; she knew each olive was precious.

As she filled the cloth around her feet, she thought of the oil that would come from her efforts. The village would need a good amount to light their homes. Some would be used for cooking; the rest would be saved for protecting their skin and hair from the harsh sun and wind. She may be able to have a small amount of oil for herself from the look of this plentiful crop.

How nice it would be if she and her friends, Phoebe and Sharon could make perfumed oils. Zoe would share the stories of the olive harvest with the young women as they mixed flower petals, herbs and spices with the olive oil to make sweet smelling scents.

Zoe smiled in anticipation as she gathered together the corners of the blanket full of olives. As she filled a basket to the top, she said a prayer of thanksgiving for the many gifts in her life.

Item #: 65103 (5" Heirloom Nativity) \$20.00 Greetings & Readings (SKU 068074)

2003 Special Event Figure with Gift Accessories Included: olive oil vessel and basket of olives

Fontanini Collectors' Club

Manufacturer: House of Fontanini - Italy



Deborah with Goose

Deborah sometimes thought that her entire life was being out in the courtyard of her parent's home. Of course, courtyards were the center of home life during biblical days, but that thought didn't please Deborah much.

She longed to have the freedom given her five brothers and often incurred her father's wrath when she begged to be allowed to go to school, or even tend the sheep... outside the boundaries of her family's watchful eye.

Each day seemed ever to be the same. Deborah rose early since it was her job to collect eggs from her charges, the geese. Each one had a name, but she never told her family that, lest they threaten to call a healer to give her awful tasting herbal roots to cure her strange behavior.

She did love the geese. And she was glad to see them each day. Her basket was always filled with eggs after she collected them, and sometimes, Deborah chased the group around and around until feathers flew and her hair had come loose from the cloth she now wore to cover her head. It was part of her new wardrobe. She now had many scarves, gifts from her mother when she turned 13 just weeks earlier.

"You are now a woman, in the eyes of God," she remembered her mother saying as red, blue and yellow head cloths were presented to Deborah so that her head might always be covered.

It was late in the evening, but the child in the woman longed to say goodnight to the geese. Stealing outside, Deborah wrapped her head and grabbed her basket, as if to take care of a last minute task.

The full moon shone as Deborah tiptoed over to the coop to find her young charges asleep with bills tucked into the downy soft feathers of their backs.

One of the large geese stretched up a long, white neck and opened an eye as if to be sure that there were no strangers threatening the group. He saw Deborah's scarf and was assured that everything was as it should be in the courtyard that night.

"If I had your wings, I would fly so far," she whispered, sitting beside the coop and taking off the scarf that reminded her that her childhood had slipped away.

And as if to say he understood her sadness, Deborah's friend arched his long neck and touched the tip of her hand before returning to sleep.

- **Item #:52584** (5" Heirloom Nativity Collection) \$13.50 (Christmas Gallery)
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini - Italy



Beth

Beth yearned to start spinning wool for her father to use in his weaving shop. All her life she watched her mother complete every step in the process: washing and drying the wool fleece, rolling it onto the hooked distaff and tucking it under one arm and then expertly pulling the fibers from the wool batt and twirling them into yarn.

Beth's mother called to her one sunny morning. "It's time you learned to spin, Beth," said her mother with a smile. "You can be a big help to your father and me by spinning yarn for rugs and when you become a wife and mother, you'll make all your family's clothing as I do. It requires patience and practice to spin yarn and weaving cloth, so you must start now." But it looks so easy, thought Beth. Perhaps her mother didn't focus on her task, always walking somewhere or talking to the neighbors as she spun.

Spending hours washing and rinsing her first fleece, Beth laid the white fibers in the sun to dry. Fleeces from the Spring shearing were harder to prepare: over the winter, the coarse sheep's fur became matted and dirty. Thorough washing with strong soap was the key to a fleecy batt for spinning. Every time I wash it, it becomes softer and finer, thought Beth. That must be the reason Mother washes her fleeces so many times.

When Beth felt that her fleece was ready, she wound it onto her distaff and tucked it under her arm. She had watched her mother prepare to spin countless times: a few fibers were pulled from the wool batt and wound around the spindle's book. A twist of the weighted spindle set it turning. Nimble fingers steadily pulled and twisted fibers, which would around the spindle. The trick was to feel the wool at the proper rate to keep the yarn at an even thickness.

To Beth's dismay, her yarn immediately broke off. "This never happens to you, Mother," she exclaimed.

"You're trying to spin too fast," her mother gently explained. "It takes weeks, even months to spin enough yarn for a tunic or rug, so take your time and enjoy it. At first, keep a slow and steady pace so your yarn will have an even thickness. Your speed will increase with practice."

Beth worked so hard on her spinning that her fingers ached. "I'll never be as good as you are, Mother. I just can't seem to learn," said the tired girl as evening approached.

"Let me show you something," confided Beth's mother. She opened a tiny wood trunk in the corner of the room and held up a child's tunic. The yarns were unevenly spun; the tunic was roughly woven and seems hung crooked. "This is the first tunic I made as a child. I kept it to remind me that no one's perfect at any task the first time they try. You'll have your whole life to learn to spin and then to weave. For now, do the best you can."

"I will make you proud of me, Mother," declared Beth as She picked up the spindle with renewed determination.

- **Item #:75511** (5" Heirloom Nativity Collection) \$17.50
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini - Italy



Gabriel

Gabriel, like many young boys, hadn't a great deal of patience for sheep tending. He loved more than anything else to daydream about traveling to distant shores meeting all sorts of different people and eating foods he had never tasted.

Sometimes, when his mother had packed up his leather bag with raisins, Brea, cheese, olives and a water pouch, Gabriel would take his lunch out and pretend the food was an exotic array of meats. After all, meat was very precious and usually only served at very special events such as celebrations and feast days.

And once Gabriel started to daydream, he was transported to a place far away... and not even the sheep he was supposed to be watching were in his thoughts. He dreamed about all of the wonderful lands his uncles had described late at night when the candle light made shadows dance against the walls of Gabriel's parents' home. The boy was truly a dreamer.

On a particularly sunny day, out of the house he went and down to the nearby meadow. It was time to walk the flock to different grassland to feed. Gabriel skipped over the rocks as the land sloped gently toward a familiar valley. He pretended to be a bird, leaping from rock to rock and lifting his arms to the sky.

Suddenly he heard a thud from behind and turned to find a small lamb wedged in between two of the rocks. Apparently, the little creature had decided to follow Gabriel's footsteps over the rocks, rather than walking with the other sheep as they took the grassy route.

Gabriel shouldered the little animal. He grabbed his front and back hooves to make sure he couldn't jump down from his shoulders and injure himself further. Then he joined the flock for the rest of the journey into the valley.

Once a camp site was selected, Gabriel set about preparing the area for the night. Not once did he complain about the lamb's weight as he chose a spot at the top of a small slope to rest for the evening. He could watch over the small herd from this grassy incline. He set his charge down on the ground and checked his legs. The lamb seemed dazed but he didn't cry out in pain. He stood tentatively and then surely. And suddenly as he had fallen, off he went to join the flock with a turn of the head that taught Gabriel, even at so young an age, that we never know who might be following in our footsteps.

- Item #72551 (5" Heirloom Nativity Collection) \$11.95
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini - Italy

Figurine depicts Gabriel, carrying a lamb over his shoulder, who served as a witness to the birth of Jesus

Actual dimensions: 4.75"H x 2.25"W x 1.75"D

Material(s): virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer



Hannah the Farm Girl

From the sun's position straight overhead, it was time for the midday meal. Throughout the fields, backs straightened and sickles ceased cutting. Hannah tossed a last sheaf into the wagon as she trudged to a shady stand of trees near some storage buildings.

Some harvesters already set there, savoring the coolness and the contents of their lunch sacks. Hannah was untying her provisions when a young man wearing a long head covering came up.

"Mind if I sit here?" he asked. "Not at all, John, make yourself comfortable. Would you like some bread?" Hannah asked.

"Why, thank you." Hannah smiled as she broke off a large piece and handed it to John. A few crumbs dropped to the ground. One of the geese wandering about came quickly and bobbed them up. The bird looked at the harvesters intently to see if there would be more. "Shoo, shoo!" admonished John. He and Hannah laughed as the goose waddled away.

"I can see why he's disappointed," mused John, chewing. "This bread is delicious. Did you make it?" "No, my sister did. She does most of the baking. I help more with the cooking," Hannah replied. "Then how is your family managing while you're gone for the harvest," John asked? "They can get along without me for a few days. The money I'm making here is more important." Hannah held out another piece of bread for John. He shook his head. "How is your family, by the way," Hannah asked John.

The young man frowned. "My sister Deborah had a sickness this winter that left her weak. She sleeps many hours, but she is still tired and can't do much without needing rest. She was always so lively before. I don't know what can be done for her."

The movement of a figure in the distance caught their attention. It was the overseer, coming to tell the group it was time to return to work.

"I will pray for your sister," Hannah said as she gathered her things together. "I will ask God to strengthen and heal her."

John helped her to her feet. "I'm grateful to you, Hannah. I will pray for Deborah and at the harvest festival I will pray at the temple." Hannah nodded. "It's good to take our troubles to the Lord. Which field are you working in? I'm headed in this direction," Hannah said as she nodded to the east.

"I'm going the other way, near the road," John replied. "Thank you again for the bread. I'll see you at the end of the day."

"See you then, John," Hannah smiled, turning back to a pile of waiting sheaves. As she worked, the words of a psalm came to mind: "The Lord upholds all who have fallen, and raises up all who are bowed down. The Lord is near to those who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth."

In another field, the young man John prayed, "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him; He will hear their cry, and save them. The Lord preserves all who love Him."

And the words of the prayers rose up under the brilliant sun.

- Item #52567(5" Heirloom Nativity Collection) \$20.00 – Greetings & Readings #57002
- **Manufacturer:** House Of Fontanini - Italy



Abraham, Elder Shepherd Praying with Sheepdog

(No card in box)

For the Fontanini 5" Collection

By Roman Inc. Item #52599

Skillfully sculpted and hand-painted in a rich, old world style palette by master, Italian artisans

Actual Dimensions: 5"H x 2"W

Material(s): Virtually unbreakable, child-friendly polymer

Comes boxed and includes a story card

SKU: ROMAN 52599



Samuel, the Farmer

If the citizens of the Holy Land were asked to name the most important members of society, they would probably select rabbis and farmers. One fed the soul and the other, the body. And while becoming a rabbi meant years of prayer and education, most farmers simply inherited the land from their fathers.

Samuel was such a man. His father taught him the many facets of farming. By the time he was ten, Samuel ten knew the secrets of the olive trees.

“Olive trees are almost immortal once they mature,” his father had told him one day. “They take 15 years to bear fruit, but they produce olives for hundreds of years.”

Each day, it seemed God’s wonders would be revealed to Samuel in the fields, and by the time he grew to manhood, he was ready for the responsibility of the farm. He married the daughter of another famer and the two moved into his parents’ home to begin their life together. As time passed, Samuel and his wife, Salome, had four sons and a daughter. He was a happy man.

But, although Samuel spent precious hours passing on the tales of the land to his sons, not one of the 4 seemed interested in the precious legacy of Samuel’s fore-fathers. The boys grew and grew, and one by one, they chose the professions of carpenter, goldsmith, stonecutter and silversmith. Who would carry on the family farm, Samuel worried each evening when he returned from the fields. Who would tend the new olive trees and celebrate when each reached maturity and bore fruit? An aging Samuel would lean on the shepherd’s staff carved by one son and ask God what he should do.

And, of course, the answer came. His beloved daughter Sarah came to him one evening as he returned from the fields covered with purple-red earth that had been freshly plowed to nurture barley and wheat seeds.

“My father, I know that you wanted my brothers to watch over your land and to grow food for the family when you are no longer here to do so. But, each of them has chosen another path. Will you consider taking my intended husband as your son to care for this land when you are gone? I know he is not your real son, but our children will surely be yours and we promise they will learn respect for God’s earth just as you taught me.”



Bethlehem Birds (No card inside box)

Five piece animal set: chicken, rooster, duck, goose and turkey

Item # (SKU): 51516 (\$26.45)



Little Shepherd Angel

The little angel was always the first to volunteer when assignments were made. But the other angels would say, “You’re too young,” or “you’re too small,” or “You can’t do that by yourself.”

One day at roll call, the seraphim announced. “There is a little lamb in Judea who needs care and protection, a guardian for the time being.” “I’ll go,” piped up the little angel. “No, you’re too – hmm, wait a minute,” said the seraphim, “A little lamb and a little angel. What do you think,” the seraphim asked the others? They stroked their wings and pondered. “I think it will work,” one finally offered and the others nodded. “Congratulation, you have your first assignment,” said the seraphim to the little angel. “Watch this lamb well, and you will go onto bigger things.”

“I’ll do my best,” pledged the little angel, and joyously sped to Earth. The lamb was tiny, just as the seraphim had said. The other sheep got to the best grass, and often left nothing but muddy dregs at a watering hole. The lamb’s coat was thin and ragged, and its head hung low. Seeing this, the little angel was moved with pity. It was spring, and the angel directed the breezes that told of new grown grass to the lamb. At the watering holes, the little angel gently nudged the sheep so that the little lamb could find a place to drink. The little angel was there at night to make sure the little lamb was safe in the sheepfold before the gate was closed. The little angel was there in the morning to smooth the lamb’s path in the rocky fields and watch for wild animals.

Over time the little lamb’s coat filled in and it stayed pure and white. No longer did the lamb look at the ground most of the time. It raced with other lambs across the pastures, reveling in the sun and warmth.

Watching this one morning, the little angel heard a voice from on high, “Your work is finished here. Take your leave; you are needed for other tasks.” Heavy-hearted, the little angel nodded.

Playing tag with its fellows, the little lamb whipped behind an outcropping and there stood the little angel with a shepherd’s staff. The little angel bent and gently picked up the little lamb. Holding it close, the little angel whispered, “The Lord is my shepherd, and He’s your shepherd too.” As if in agreement, the little lamb snuggled closer to the little angel.

SKU: 43529 (\$12.50)



Malachi, King of the Slaves (1983)

(No card in box)

Item # 52561



Jeremiah, the Shepherd

Jeremiah was a righteous person. He believed every inspiring story written of God's promise to send a Savior to Earth. Each filled his heart with joy, and when rumors of a divine birth reached Jeremiah's village, he felt confident that the Messiah had come at last.

Unfortunately for Jeremiah, few villagers believed as strongly. Perhaps it was the hard life they lived or appearances in the past of other men pretending to be the Savior. Whatever the reasons, Jeremiah's neighbors lacked his faith but that didn't stop Jeremiah.

"My brothers," he urged, "let us go to Bethlehem to see the Promised One. It is early spring and the roads will be easy to travel. Please, come with me. This may be our only opportunity to be blessed." "You have drunk too much wine," they

laughed, "and if you keep making plans to visit every arriving Messiah, you shall have no time for your flock."

A discouraged Jeremiah returned to his wife and asked her, "Do you believe this is another hoax?" He was prepared for her nod but Tirzah's sweet smile encouraged her husband to be true to his feelings. "Do not listen to them," she counselled, "listen to your heart." Her love removed all feelings of isolation and hopelessness. "I will see the Child for myself," he concluded, "no matter what the others say."

In the pre-dawn light Jeremiah set out with food and bedroll after picking the gentlest lamb in his flock. Tirzah waved and watched them disappear over the hilltop. Two suns rose and set before Jeremiah reached Bethlehem. Tired and dirty, Jeremiah stopped at a well on the outskirts of town and was given a drink by two kind women. "Can you tell me where the Child is," he asked half expecting the women to say, "What child." But God provided the answer as both women smiled silently, nodding their heads. One pointed to a road, insisting Jeremiah drink again before finishing his pilgrimage.

His heart beat wildly as he lifted the lamb into his arms, as though walking the little animal the final steps might be sacrilege. A sacred song came to him as the road narrowed. Jeremiah thought of the message he would surely bring home to his family and friends and smiled to the heavens. There was no doubt. This was the highlight of a lifelong journey of faith.

5 Inch Scale by Fontanini

Code: 52587 (\$15.00)



Mordecai

Mordecai had never been a happy child, and as he grew to adulthood, his personality grew more and more cantankerous. People suspected that his mother's early death upset him so severely that he decided never, ever to smile. To avoid people, Mordecai found work at a Bethlehem village gate as night watchman. A lantern and a supply of oil were all the company he needed. He spent his nights yelling: "Who's there?" from sun down to sun up.

All kinds of people came out of the night and Mordecai saw them all: the empty faces, the silent wanderers. Leaning on his crooked walking stick, he did his lonely job.

On a particularly chilly night just past the Winter Solstice, Mordecai's supper was interrupted by the sound of approaching traveler. He looked up to see a little donkey laboring up to the gate bearing a tired but beautiful young woman. Leading the beast was a decidedly older, bearded man, obviously weary from mile of walking. Challenging their entry with his threatening stance, Mordecai leaned heavily on his rugged stick and lifted the lantern. Light spilled over the strangers. "Shalom. We seek an inn, my friend," the traveler asked, letting go of the rope bridle. "We have traveled far and my wife needs rest... and soon," he added urgently.

Mordecai moved closer to the young woman. Despite her loose garments, he could see that she was expecting a child very shortly. Mordecai began to bark out his standard directions, but for some reason even he did not fathom, he stopped. Instead, his gaze remained fixed upon the woman. She seemed to glow with a shimmering aura of light, all her own. "We are so grateful for your assistance," she said to Mordecai, smiling a smile that touched his heart. Her hand reached out from beneath the blue wrap she wore and rested lightly on his shoulder.

The gatekeeper was transfixed. He could not lower his lamp, nor could he speak for what seemed an eternity. Her smile continued to radiate until the little man felt his heart swell with warmth... a warm as the glowing lantern held aloft in his hand. "Please, my lady, let me help you," Mordecai said, picking up the dropped tether from the ground. "I cannot stay away from here too long but I will walk with you as far as the temple and point the way to an inn." With that, Mordecai smiled a smile of the angels. He led the couple silently towards the inn and when he returned to his gate, he was no longer the same man.

5 Inch Scale by Fontanini

Code: 72557 (Christmas Spirit #47, \$15.00)



White Sheep – 5 pieces

The raising of sheep was a critical part of the Holy Land's social and agricultural system centuries ago. Sheep provided clothing, food and milk and were part of the intricate sacrificial system that governed religious life at the time of Christ's birth. But these gentle creatures provided more than sustenance. So close was the relationship between man and sheep, it was said that when God's love of man was visualized it was most often depicted as a shepherd with his animals. As further proof of this bond, scholars have found over 500 references to sheep in the New Testament.

The seasons of the sheep were predictable and cyclical in nature. Spring symbolically started the year, for in March and April, ewes, having been bred five months before, lambled. The newborns were usually given names at birth and learned to respond to those names in a very short amount of time.

About a month after lambing, adult sheep were shorn in the midst of celebratory feasting and dancing. After shearing, flocks were let to pools where they were dipped in water twice and immediately after the groups emerged from the water, the spring "harvest" festival began.

By autumn, the fields were stripped bare and sheep often relied upon thorns as a food source. Careful to avoid grain fields where crops were nearing harvest, shepherds led their ewes, rams and lambs about the countryside in anticipation of the coming winter when the Judean hills steamed with cold rain.

Although sheep have been depicted through the ages as being meek or bashful, a more apt description might be gentle and loving, vulnerable and dependent upon their shepherd masters. Shepherds' tales, passed down through time, describe the tender and affectionate nature of these loving animals with historical accuracy.

Maybe it was because shepherds spent many solitary hours in the fields with their flocks that these particular animals bonded so closely to man or perhaps God simply gave sheep a special gift of understanding that still exists between the two today.

5 Inch Scale 5 Piece White Sheep Set by Fontanini

Code: 72539X

Christmas Spirit: \$20.00

Hand-painted polymer.

Set of 5, 1998 Introduction

All five sheep are about 1½" tall.

Fontanini #72539

Brunner #1011158

Code: **54028X**

Price: **\$14.94**

Shipping Weight: **0.75** pounds

the story of
THADDEUS

Thaddeus treasured his father's heritage: a busy Bethlehem inn. He and his wife, Elisabeth, were gracious hosts with the help of their son, Jacob, and nephew, David. The youngsters were true blessings the winter Rome ordered citizens to their birthplaces for a census. Soon, sojourners filled Bethlehem. Those without relatives camped on the cold ground or stayed at the inn. One dark night, Thaddeus opened his door to find a couple in desperate need of a room. The woman's child was about to arrive... and not a single room was unoccupied. Thaddeus deliberated. Timidly, he offered the stable. Joseph thanked him as though it were the finest room in the inn.

Thaddeus went to bed, but sleep

came fitfully. A gentle man, he agonized when guests could not be properly lodged. Despite little sleep, he rose at dawn to bid his guests farewell. To his surprise, they milled around angrily. Confused, Thaddeus asked each, "Have I offended you?" Eyes lowered. Voices muttered. At last, one man pointed to the stable, "What kind of man refuses lodgings to a couple in need?"

Thaddeus scratched his head, recalling the night before. Refuse them? He had welcomed them! He ran to his stable. Shocked, he saw only his animals. Stumbling to the temple, he fell to his knees. "My Lord, have I grown mad? Did a couple not come last night... was the wife not with child? I would never have turned them away!" He prayed fervently, falling exhausted to the ground. When he awoke, he found himself beside Elisabeth. Had

this all been a dream? Thaddeus jumped to his feet, donned his striped tunic and sash. Gold keys dangling, he ran to the barn.

The couple rested quietly. Thaddeus felt his heart fill with joy as he cautiously approached. Light radiated from the woman's arms. When Joseph beckoned, Thaddeus whispered, "I dreamed I turned you away last night!" Joseph shook his head, embracing him. "God led us here. He knew you would care for us." He urged Thaddeus forward so he might see Jesus in Mary's arms, thanking him over and over.

In that moment, Thaddeus recalled the promise he had made to his father the day he took his place: "I will never turn away a needy stranger as long as I am inn keeper." On that day, Thaddeus renewed his pledge in the name of the Newborn King.



the story of
THE DOG

The children of the Holy Land were just like today's youngsters. They pretended to be adventurers and travelers, running free beyond the safety of home into the summer meadows where family sheep grazed. Having a dog meant livelier playtimes. A small, furry friend could play camel or mend a little heart.

All of this considered, Abram and Abra's father would still not hear of it. He considered dogs to be unnecessary burdens, particularly in a home where there was no mother. All the more reason to get one, the twins pleaded. A friend would keep them company each day as their father went out to tend the sheep. The two whispered late into the night about how wonderful a dog of their very own would be.

Perhaps God heard the two talking, for one day, a tiny golden-colored dog found his way to Abra and Abram's house. To their delight, the puppy walked in as though he owned the place! But, what to do about their father?

Winter was fast approaching and it was not a good time of the year to ask for favors. Their mother had died dur-

ing the winter and the sadness of her departure had left their father's heart broken. The only answer, the children concluded, was to hide the dog until the time was right to tell their father. Thus a small shelter was constructed by the children at the edge of the village.

A conspiracy of love evolved from that day in the early winter. Scraps of food and water, meticulously hidden by the children found their way to the dog's shelter every morning. How the twins loved the visits, and how careful they were not to let townspeople see their treasure, lest their father be alerted. Along with food, the two carried tenderness and affection to the growing pup. They played with him and stroked his head, returning home reluctantly as the sun dipped into the western sky each day; their secret kept for one day more.

Late one night, a cold north wind swept into the house. Abram awoke, for his bedroll was closest to the yard. He shook Abra. The two wondered if their dog was safe. Putting on their warm wraps quietly as their father slept, off they ran to the little shelter, finding it destroyed by the wild night winds. The dog was gone, too.

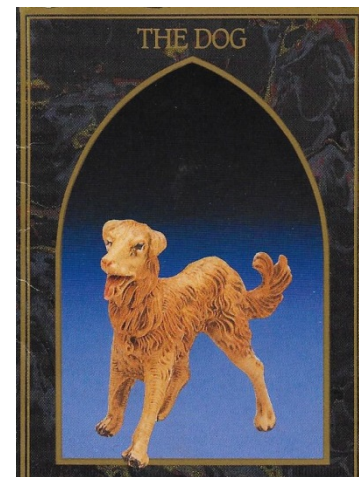
Abra began to cry but her brother quickly comforted her. "Don't be afraid, Abra. We will find him very soon." They

searched and they searched, but to no avail. The wind whipped about them and they grew cold and tired. Abram insisted that the two take shelter, but where?

As though they had asked the question aloud, a shining star came into the heaven, filling the sky with beams of light. Its longest tip pulsated onto a small grove of trees. The children ran to the grove. Upon reaching safe haven, a wondrous band of angels burst into the sky singing wonderful songs of rejoicing. Abra and Abram heard all about a child who had just been born in nearby Bethlehem. Then the wind stopped and the earth stood very still, bathed in a glorious light.

How could the two explain what had happened? Even to each other? Abram took his sister's hand and the pair headed back to the house in the hush hours of the new day.

Waiting for them was their father. He sat with his arm around their flaxen-haired dog. And in a moment, the two knew that there was peace in the house once more.



the story of
**THE KNEELING
ANGEL**

Several thousand years ago, winter approached bringing a flurry of activity among the angelic chorus in heaven. Preparations for the winter concert were in progress, taking the efforts of thousands. Special robes sprinkled with stardust were fashioned of white. Wings were kept polished to glisten even in the dark, blue sky.

One young angel watched the excitement from afar with longing in her heart. She wanted to join the chorus, for her heart was filled with love for God and she knew that singing brought Him joy. But try as she might, the little angel couldn't carry a tune, no matter how hard she practiced. So she did what she could to help the other angels, tidying halos and smoothing out

robes so they twinkled like a galaxy of stars.

When the pageant ended, the angels were weary from singing so loudly. They could barely fly and didn't know what to do when this important message was heralded by the archangels: Angel choristers were needed to go to earth at midnight, for a miraculous birth was about to take place in Bethlehem in the Holy Land.

What a quandary! Most of the angels were too weary to think about singing. Not so this little angel. She wanted so to add her voice to this special occasion. She prayed and prayed for an answer, and quickly realized that her gift of song to God was one that could not be held back.

Off she went to a private cloud, fluffing her robe and filling her head with every sweet thought she'd ever had. Then she opened her mouth

and out came the most beautiful notes ever heard! Could they really be coming from her, she wondered? She sang again and realized that the songs came directly from her heart.

At midnight, God called out to the little angel. She went to the appointed cloud and instantly found herself dressed in a wonderful robe of shimmering blue. A blue sash was wrapped about her waist and a golden band tied her hair. Ready at last, the little angel flew with great speed toward earth, lighting beside a tiny stable. "Sing your song," a familiar voice told her, as a reassuring tap on her wings drove her forward. "You have been chosen from many to honor our new Lord."



Code #: 72518

the story of

JARETH

(The Drummer Boy)

Jareth loved playing his toy drum. He often imitated his father Abraham, the village's best drummer. Jareth pretended to play the family treasure: an ancient drum that had passed from generation to generation.

"Playing the drum is your gift," Jareth often heard his father say "God gave you that talent, as he gave it to me," he added. Jareth nodded, but never truly understood what that meant.

Each evening, the drums came out after dinner. Then the boy was tucked into his bedroll beside the fire as his parents talked into the night. There was a comforting regularity to each night, until one particularly unforgettable event awoke all of the families in the town: A golden star appeared in the heavens accompanied by the soothing voices of angels across the sky.

Jareth was the first to awaken and he quickly roused his parents. All three wrapped themselves in cloaks

and ran out into the winter night. Even Abraham, who knew much, could not tell his family where the star came from. Neither could he disguise the touch of fear that crept into his voice. The little family returned to bed, and despite the unusual occurrence, the boy's parents fell asleep.

But Jareth could not sleep. He wanted to know about the star. He wondered where it pointed and what he would find there. Assured of his parents' slumber, the child crept out of the house and made his way toward the very place the star touched the earth. To his surprise, Jareth found himself at an inn's stable. Standing on tiptoe, he looked into the window and was surprised to find a man, woman and child inside, as well as richly dressed men with gifts of gold. They placed them before the child and bowed before his little bed.

Jareth saw animals sitting quietly beside the baby and he marveled at the golden glow . . . just like that of the star . . . that radiated from the mother. Despite his young age, Jareth knew this was no ordinary

child. He, too, must bring a gift.

Walking quietly toward his little house, Jareth's mind kept repeating over and over: "A gift. I must bring a gift." He thought and he thought, until suddenly an angel brushed his ear and whispered, "Your gift comes from your father."

In an instant, Jareth knew what he could give to the little child. His walk became a run, and his cold breath blew in billows as he approached his house. Working quietly so as not to wake his parents, Jareth changed into his very best clothing and quietly removed his little drum from the corner of the room.

Then, guided once more by the star and the voices, Jareth rushed back toward the stable bearing the most precious gift he had to give: the song of his fathers . . . a true gift from God.



the story of

TIMOTHY

Given a choice, Timothy would rather have stayed home with his wife, sons, and flock—but when Roman authorities ordered a census, the citizens obeyed. Timothy prepared for the journey to Bethlehem, his hometown. He found his traveling cloak and walking stick. He counted the coins needed for the tax and put them into a leather pouch tied to his belt. Nahome, his wife, gathered bread, figs and dried fish, then bundled the food into a piece of cloth.

“Take this, too,” Nahome urged, and she tucked a folded blanket into the bundle. “It is the blanket I wove just before Micah was born. It will remind you of our family on your journey.”

Timothy embraced his wife, waved to his sons, and set off toward the south. Occasionally popping a morsel of food into his mouth, Timothy smiled each time he opened the

bundle and saw his firstborn son’s baby blanket.

Timothy walked until day turned into night. Exhausted, he spotted a grove of trees that looked like the perfect place to sleep. To his dismay, he discovered a couple had already settled in.

“Please, do not leave,” the man urged as Timothy approached. “There is plenty of room for you.”

“You are kind,” Timothy answered, glancing at the young woman resting beside the man.

“My wife,” the man explained. Timothy nodded. He noticed that she was heavy with child, and dressed too lightly for the chilly night.

“You look cold,” Timothy ventured. Without hesitation, he unwrapped the blanket and handed it to her. “Please take this blanket. It is made of wool from my sheep and woven by my wife. It will keep you warm.” The young woman accepted with a shy nod of her head.

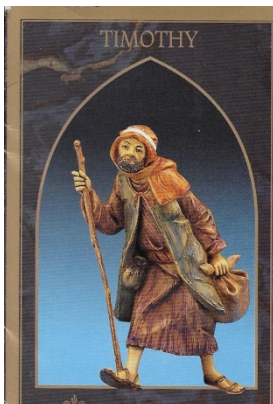
The couple had already departed

when Timothy rose the next morning. He ate a few bites of food, then resumed his journey, hoping that Nahome would approve his gift of the blanket.

The streets of Bethlehem were filled with people. First, Timothy decided to visit Bethlehem’s inn to reserve a bed for that night. As he approached, he was drawn instead to the little stable behind the inn. Timothy’s eyes adjusted to the dim light, and he beheld an amazing sight. A woman was holding a sleeping baby in her arms.

“Behold the son of God! Our Messiah is born!” cried a shepherd kneeling nearby.

Timothy drew closer. “How do I know this woman?” he wondered. Catching sight of a blanket beneath the baby, he exclaimed, “Oh, you are the one who needed Micah’s blanket! My family is honored that our firstborn son’s blanket has also welcomed your son, our Savior, into the world.”



Tradition of figurine makers in Bagni di Lucca



The history of Fontanini dates way back with roots that lie in the tradition of **Bagni di Lucca**, where the founding figurine makers are found.

The town, which was a favourite of the rich Englishmen who frequently visited its famous spas, now also lives on due to the figurine industry.

The last representatives of this hard-working category of figurine-makers still live in the area who have passed their craft down from generation to generation.



Emanuele Fontanini, the family's progenitor, who was strong in this tradition, exported the art of the figurine to some European capitals in 1893.

From papier mache to Nativity.

In 1908, thanks to the overseas experience, he opened a small craft workshop in Bagni di Lucca where, having abandoned plaster and taken up papier mache workmanship, he started to produce rockers, spider to which springs were added on the side of their bodies and which, hanging by a thread and moved, oscillated.

Given the considerable success, Emanuele went on to produce little soldiers and doll's faces using the same material.



His sons **Mario and Aldo** worked on the expansion of a small workshop, which had already become a real little figurine factory in 1936. The Fontanini family soon started to export the nativities scenes, Mario's speciality, and the papier mache figurines into the USA.



Plastic advent and religious items production.

In the 1960's, Mario headed up the company's first large-scale technological revolution: the arrival of the plastic and the production by injecting into moulds.

Having overcome the market's initial distrust, in 1963 Ugo, Piero and Mariano, Mario's sons, opened Fonplast in Chifenti, a company of articles for favours and religious objects, developing the commercial business of the Fontanini company. With the increase in export to the USA, Ugo, Piero and Mariano managed the production through the second revolution of the Fontanini companies: **a nativity with figures that were 125 centimeters high.**

An export policy, especially to USA

The company has always had a sales policy that is aimed at overseas, so much so that it follows and extends in the steps of its great founder, Emanuele. It is the fourth generation who is advancing the family's standard by tackling the competition of the Asian market.

Fontanini has long been a household name for the finest quality in Italian crafted religious statues and figurines, especially known for their lifelike, historically accurate nativity sets reminiscent of first century Bethlehem. Since 1908, the House of Fontanini in Lucca, Italy has excelled in their tradition of creating nativity figures, scenes, and accessories with care, craftsmanship, and intricate beauty. Fontanini nativities are an excellent choice for a classic and timeless Christmas display.