

Circle of Love

By Paula Tudor

Around this time last year a television movie premiered on NBC and became a surprise hit. Of course I am talking about Dolly Parton's *Coat of Many Colors*, which tells the story of Dolly receiving the patchwork coat that would later inspire one of her most famous songs. This movie touched so many people that a sequel was created called *Christmas of Many Colors: Circle of Love*.

Circle of Love picks up about where *Coat of Many Colors* left off. It is Christmas time in the Parton house and all the kids have thumbed through the Wishbook catalog and decided what they want for Christmas. Robert and Avie Lee Parton have just enough money to buy each of the children something for Christmas. So when Robert sees Avie Lee admiring a ring in the store, the would-be wedding ring he was never able to buy her, he becomes determined to find a way to make some extra money for Christmas. Taking the advice of his oldest daughter, Robert enlists the help of the rest of the Parton children, who agree to give up their prospective Christmas gifts and work to earn enough money to help pay for their mother's ring. However, a surprise visit from Avie Lee's successful brother makes Robert feel guilty about his family's constant financial struggles so he takes a mining job a few days before Christmas. Avie Lee, who had just had a dream about her children freezing to death, begs Robert not to go; but he ignores her wishes, placing himself and his family in peril.

At its core, *Circle of Love* is a movie about faith. It is this faith that carries the Parton family through seemingly hopeless circumstances and situations throughout the film. Therefore it is not difficult, especially given Dolly Parton's involvement in her films, to imagine just how much her family's faith in God shaped their daily lives. *Circle of Love*, like *Coat of Many Colors*, is apparently based on real-life events from Dolly's childhood, and reaffirms the existence of miracles, showing what is possible when one places their faith and trust in God.

Circle of Love premiered on NBC last month, on November 30th. Prior to deciding to write about this movie for my December column I had been struggling for weeks to come up with a good topic. I always like to incorporate a Christmas theme for the month of December whenever possible, so when I discovered that the airing of this movie perfectly coincided with my deadline I knew I had to write about it. However, I never could have predicted that the timing of this film would prove to be so much more meaningful than that. Shortly after I decided to review Dolly Parton's latest film, news came that wildfires were spreading through the Gatlinburg area. As I am writing this article people are in mourning. They are sad, angry, confused, hurt, and fearful for what the future holds. It is in light of this recent tragedy, so close to home, that *Circle of Love's* message becomes all the more poignant and profound.

For those of you who watched this movie when it aired, you undoubtedly saw Dolly Parton address the audience before and after the film. Her words, particularly after the film, seem even more significant when one considers that it had to have been recorded weeks or months before the wildfires. "Please hold your families close this Christmas, love and accept each other, and always be kind."

Shortly after Christmas of Many Colors: Circle of Love aired, Dolly Parton released a video statement announcing that her Dollywood companies and her Dollywood Foundation would be setting up a "My People Fund" to help families who had lost their homes in the fires. At the time this article was written more information about the "My People Fund" was expected to be available on December 2nd at dollywoodfoundation.org.

If you missed Christmas of Many Colors: Circle of Love or just want to see it again, it will most likely air again on NBC in the coming weeks. You can also watch it online at NBC.com, and it will also be available for purchase on DVD December 20th.

Merry Christmas everyone!

Paula Tudor is a freelance writer, and a distinguished blogger/online correspondent, with more than three thousand followers on twitter. The bulk of her work can be found at <http://www.paulas-soapbox.blogspot.com>