

# The Gift of Love

Nichi's little body was horribly paralyzed. She spent hours every Sunday crawling to and from the little mission church in the African bush, where she had found Jesus.

A parcel of toys arrived from America, and among them was an old rag doll, naked and wobbly, with black dots for eyes. The missionary dressed the doll in a pretty pink dress and gave her to Nichi.

Nichi named her doll Lutando ("Love"). She tied Lutando on her back with bark strips like a real mother. Nichi took Lutando to church, talked to her, slept with her, and prayed for her. Nichi's life was transformed by her love for Lutando.

The big missionary-offering day came. Christians from far and near gathered, each with his *umbongo* (a present with which to express thanks).

The pastor held up a square of cowhide, indicating that an ox would be given to express his thanks, sending the Gospel to those who had not heard. Women waved feathers, pledging chickens. A determined young man pushed a rebellious goat up to the speaker's stand. Others dragged sacks of peanuts and sweet potatoes, bundles of sugarcane, baskets of eggs, and clusters of fruit around the altar. Then baskets were distributed to gather the remaining gifts.

Nichi untied the strings, slipped Lutando from her back, squeezed her tenderly, and then, with tears standing in her black eyes and a heavenly glow on her little face, she laid her beloved "baby," Lutando, in the missionary basket.

A hush settled over the startled congregation. Strong men and women wept. Perhaps they remembered another day when a loving Parent had not withheld His only Son, but had delivered Him up for us all.

A man stood and suggested that Baby Lutando be redeemed.

"What is the price with which she was bought?" asked one.

"Maybe a shilling, very little price in America," another answered.

"Lutando shall be redeemed," the pastor pronounced, "not for the price with which she was bought in America, but for the price of her worth to Nichi."

Four headmen each gave a cow, a tremendous price to an African. With these four cows, Baby Lutando was redeemed and returned to the arms of a beaming Nichi.

Nichi gave, and God gave. What will you give in the Easter Offering to share that love with others? May your gift please Him who gave His all for us.

Louise Robinson Chapman  
Global NMI President Emerita

January/February/March 1975 *General Council Tidings* (adapted)

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