

# Jesus Dolls Now Available for Idolaters

*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea follows this article.*

## **Dolls encourage children to play with Jesus, saints**

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About 10 years ago, Mary Englund moved her 5-year-old son into a basement room - and he was terrified.

To comfort him, Englund put a statue of Jesus in the bed with him.

"I put it under the blanket and told him, 'Jesus wouldn't want you to be afraid,'" she said. "He was fine with it. I said, 'I'm sorry it's not soft.' When I left the room, I thought, 'I wonder if there is a Jesus doll.'"

There is now, and plenty of them.

Englund created what has become known as "My Loving Jesus Doll," which sells for \$19.95. It's about a foot tall, a squeezable soft doll with outstretched arms, dressed in a robe. It comes with a linen scroll addressed to a child, explaining who Jesus is.

Englund, 47, a mother of three in Champlain, Minn., began making the dolls and sold 400 to 500 out of her basement. She got help with the sewing, and her kids helped stuff the dolls. "It sold by word of mouth," Englund said.

Dolls are important companions for children, she said, and can be used as a tool to introduce children to Jesus. "If you can plant that seed early, it doesn't go away," Englund said. "When I was a girl I talked to my dolls. I loved my dolls."

*Note from Pastor Kevin: Having a doll is not idolatry. But seeking comfort, spiritual guidance, etc. from a doll is. **Exo 20:5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.** Christians should be careful to teach their*

*children about this subtle aspect of idolatry.*

The business got too big for her, so she brought in Jim Keding, who worked in the wholesale grocery distribution business. He arranged for a more professionally made and packaged Jesus doll, still using the soft, washable fabric concept.

Keding had a booth at the recent Catholic Marketing Network conference in Birmingham, Jan. 10-13. He was trying to sell the dolls to Catholic stores nationwide.

"They are new on the market nationally," he said.

At the opposite end of the exhibit hall, a more expensive Jesus doll was on display. Made with molded rubber face and hands, the Soft Saints dolls sell for \$98 apiece. "We can barely stay ahead of the demand," said Teri O'Toole, founder of Soft Saints based in Anaheim, Calif. She said she began making and selling her realistic-looking dolls in 2000. "I looked at the religious gifts available to children," said O'Toole, a former advertising executive. "There wasn't much available. What do you give a kid - a rosary, a statue?"

The toys children play with have an emotional impact on their lives, she said. "Give a girl a Barbie doll, and by the time she's 11, she's dressing like Britney Spears," O'Toole said. "Give a boy a GI Joe, and he's playing war. We innocently give our children role models to aspire to be like. I wanted to give children a role model that really lived, who lived a holy life."

*Ps 115:4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; 6 They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; 7 They have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. 8 **Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.** 9 O Israel, trust in the LORD; he is their help and their shield. (NKJ)*

*Trusting in the Lord is NOT making a Jesus idol in order to be like Jesus. We are to love and serve Him by faith and allow His Holy Spirit to make us into the new creation that we are.*

She offers several Jesus dolls, including an infant Jesus. And she sells a Virgin Mary holding a baby Jesus. There are 28 historical characters, including Joan of Arc, Pope John Paul II, St. Francis and Mother Teresa, with four new ones coming out this spring. "They look like porcelain dolls,

but I wanted the dolls to feel like skin and be virtually indestructible," O'Toole said. "This is a hand-crafted doll. We have stay-at-home moms who sew for us."

Another entry in the Christian doll market is Faith Filled Friends, small plush religious toys made by J-Zoo in Vista, Calif., including Jesus and other saints in a simple style like stuffed carnival toys, selling for \$16.95.

So the market for religious toys has been growing, with a selection from the simple and cheap to the more expensive and finely crafted. There really are wholesome dolls available now, O'Toole said. "A lot of people just don't know about it," she said.

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*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: This article brings to our attention the growing popularity of "Jesus dolls." Some may wonder why someone hadn't thought of this before. To me the answer is obvious; in the past there was a fear of God and knowledge that making an idol of a supposed Jesus would be the height of blasphemy. But the knowledge and fear of God has left our people and been replaced with the apostasy that the Lord Jesus said would typify the "Last Days."*

*Exod 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 "You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (NKJ)*

*1 Cor 10:19 What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. (NKJ)*

*1 Cor 12:2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. (NKJ)*

*1 Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has*

*given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. (NKJ)*