

# **Marines change course, will take Jesus dolls: Toy company inundated with requests**

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A 12-inch talking Jesus doll may find its way to needy children this Christmas after the U.S. Marines' Toys for Tots Christmas toy drive reversed course in mid-November and decided to accept the dolls.

The Toys for Tots Foundation had initially declined a donation of 4,000 Jesus dolls from the Valencia, California-based Beverly Hills Teddy Bear Company, saying they could be inappropriate for non-Christian children.

"We realized it's a lot less time-consuming to find homes for the dolls than it is to answer media and complaints," said Bill Grein, vice president of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation in Quantico, Virginia.

When the decision to reject the toys got out, the toy company began receiving hundreds of phone calls and e-mails from organizations and people who would like to receive the dolls.

"The phones are ringing off the hook. There is a new e-mail every few seconds. It is unbelievable," said Michael La Roe, director of business development for the company. "We had someone write in from Okinawa, Japan. The word is spreading all over the country and in some cases all over the world."

The dolls, which retail for \$20, quote six different scripture verses from the Gospels of Matthew and John, including: "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

He said that the toy company would sort through all the requests. The company will try to accommodate the Toys for Tots program as well, but will not be giving all 4,000 dolls to it. Samaritan's Purse, a relief agency run by evangelist Franklin Graham, has received thousands of the dolls. *-Religion News Service*