

Along the track

A Christmas Blessing

The birth of Christ which we celebrate at this time is meant for everyone. It is meant to be news of great joy for everyone. So when people look at our family celebrations, the family traditions we have established, the patterns of behaviour we have created at this time, will they see people of joy and celebration, people who want all people to know about this great event? Will they see us as prayerful, looking for ways this Christmas to help others? Or will they see just see “grumps” who rail against those who celebrate in other ways or criticising those who celebrate by buying what we consider to be too much etc? Or will we be grateful that so many people are still celebrating Christmas, that Christmas still brings joy and happiness to so many, that great news is shared by all people, as the angel said?

So put up the decorations! Send the Christmas cards (sadly a dying tradition), especially to those we have not seen or heard from in a while. Celebrate and rejoice! Give generously to the annual St Vincent de Paul appeals at this time. Will your local church or school or organisation include an overseas community or family in their celebrations this year?

Christmas is a time of giving but finding the appropriate gift is never easy! Thinking about presents - birthdays, Christmas, farewells, weddings can cause a lot of anxiety. How much do I spend? Would they like this? Do I get something practical or something more ‘romantic’?

It’s worth reflecting on the reasons why we chose to give a gift in the first place and what it represents. Otherwise the giving of gifts can become a meaningless ritual. Gifts can say that we appreciate who you are to us and what you have done’. On this Christmas, what do we want our gift to say?

On the other hand, what gifts would you like to get? All of us have received gifts we don’t know what to do with or that we give away as soon as is seemly. So here are some suggestions for gifts that we can give ourselves, gifts that shouldn’t cost much at all and that will be worth keeping.

1. Take note of the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children at this time. It’s infectious. It might lead you to a renewed awareness and appreciation of whatever you so easily take for granted.
2. Gathering together can be filled with many gifts. Be generous with your hugs, kisses, pats on the back, your signs of affection and appreciation. These simple actions demonstrate so much. How many times have these simple actions given us a boost just when we needed it, or they may have

helped change our outlook on life? Laughter too is a wonderful thing. It can work miracles. It can change a mood, refresh your outlook on life and help us not to take ourselves too seriously.

3. A gentle tongue is a gift to everyone, ourselves included. No sharp words, envious thoughts, or hostile feelings. Give yourself the gift of being positive, encouraging and seeing the bright side of life. No complaining, no feeling sorry for yourself, no nasty comments. Cheerfulness is also something precious for everyone...including yourself. So is paying compliments. We all need them. We all appreciate them. Without them we do not learn some of the great lessons in life!
4. We all like to be heard, to be given the courtesy of being listened to. Make sure you give that gift this Christmas. You will probably receive it in return. It means we must really listen. Take time. No interrupting, no walking away, no planning our response while the other is talking....Listening deeply to another often enables us to go beyond the words and hear the real message.
5. The Gift of Prayer. What a great gift! A prayer for yourself and a prayer for those who are dear to us. This gift doesn’t need a warranty or a refund clause. It’s fully guaranteed.

So this Christmas

May you give and receive love generously.

May the coming year be one of good health for you and yours.

May you care well for your body, mind, and especially your spirit.

May you daily open the gift of your life and be grateful for the hidden treasures it contains.

May you find the presence of God in your days and your endeavours

And may God continue to bless you and those you love.

Regards

Jim Quillinan

Email: jquillinan@dcsi.net.au