

"His law is love and His gospel is peace"

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December 2007

celebrate
December

GRACE IN Action

LIVING CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP™

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Holy day of obligation
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Our Lady of Guadalupe, photo by James Baca

new parables

Extend tidings of comfort, joy



here were two men of means. Both lived in the city and worked in jobs with status and stock options. Both men were fond of the Christmas season, and both were possessed of generous natures. Both enjoyed giving Christmas gifts, but the two men observed the holiday tradition in different ways.

One man bought lavish presents for his family members and friends. He found profound joy in giving the finest gifts of silver and gold, crystal and cashmere. He spared no expense, and he also paid for elaborate gift-wrapping to make his offerings sparkle and shine and stand out from all other gifts.

This man, however, never put any coins in the kettle of the bell-ringers collecting cash for people in need. He quickly trashed all mail asking him for a donation on behalf of less fortunate people. This man looked right past the homeless woman on the street to the fancy window dressings in the swanky, uptown stores where he shopped.

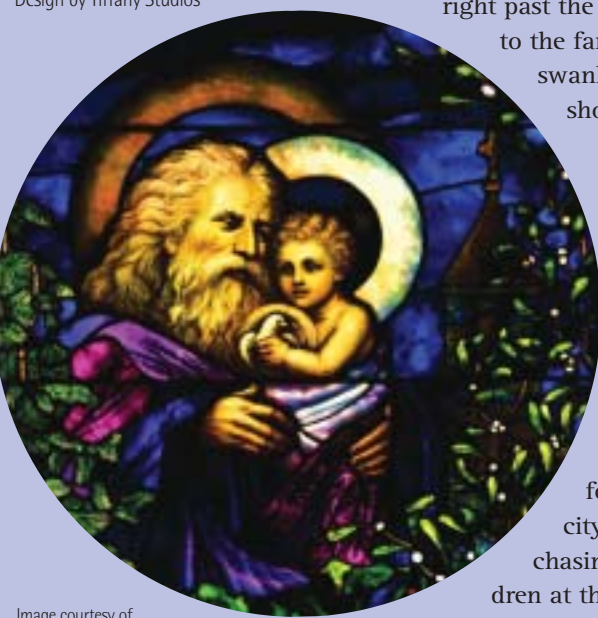


Image courtesy of Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art Winter Park, Fla.

but kept his gifts to them nominal, often making charitable donations in their name, instead. And all the charity this man extended at Christmas, he did in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

The other man took delight in extending generosity to people he did not know — people he knew were in need. This man's Christmas spirit extended to neighbors and strangers, alike. This man wrote checks to charities and bought practical gifts — coats and boots and food — for the poorest of the poor in his city. He especially enjoyed purchasing toys and books for children at the homeless shelter in the shadow of his high-rise office. This man observed Christmas with family and friends,



the way we pray "O Mystical Rose"

Our Lady of Guadalupe, who blessed Mexico and all the Americas by your appearance to Juan Diego, intercede for the holy Church, protect the pope and help everyone who invokes you in their necessities.

O Mystical Rose, hear our prayers and our petitions, especially for the particular one we are praying for at this moment (mention your request).

Since you are the ever-Virgin Mary and mother of the true God, obtain for us from your most holy Son the grace of keeping our faith, sweet hope in the midst of the bitterness of life, burning charity and the precious gift of final perseverance. Amen.



"Out of God's gifts, then, we make gifts to God."

— St. Augustine



James Baca photo

modern disciple Jesuit priest subject to Prince of Peace

“Christmas is about peace, because when Jesus was born, the angels could not contain themselves and started singing to the shepherds and announcing that with the birth of Jesus, we have peace on earth. But as I look around the world, I think we have rejected the Christmas gift of peace on earth. We prefer war on earth – war with ourselves, with one another, with everyone. We have firmly turned the angels away and said, ‘No thank you. We like our wars.’

“But the good news today is that God is giving us the greatest present in Jesus, the gift of being at peace with God and ourselves and everyone everywhere. Now you can be cynical like everyone else and say, ‘That’s nice, but that’s totally unrealistic or just pie in the sky,’ or you can say, ‘Thank you God for this great gift, and in honor of Jesus, we pledge to welcome the gift you give us and live at peace with you and one another and do our part to make peace on earth a reality.’ . . . So, today, the angels say to us what they said to the shepherds in the fields long ago: ‘Do not be afraid!’”

— Jesuit Father John Dear

sowing seeds "Handmaid of the Lord"

"In a special way, the Blessed Virgin is the model of Christian discipleship and of the practice of Christian stewardship."

— *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*
U.S. Catholic bishops' stewardship pastoral

At Christmas, when we traditionally exchange gifts, as Christian stewards we also might consider the exchange of gifts between God and us. One of God's great gifts to Mary was her immaculate conception – that is, being conceived without original sin.

One of Mary's great gifts to God was her willingness to say yes to God's salvation plan. Mary proclaimed, "Be it done unto me according to your will" (Lk 1:38). Mary identified herself as "a handmaid of the Lord," and that's a role to which each of us can aspire. This Advent, consider all that you know about the Mother of God and look to the Queen of Heaven as your stewardship role model.

What gifts does God give to you? What gifts do you present to God? What qualities of the Blessed Mother do you possess? What Marian characteristics would you like to possess?

defining moments Stewardship alphabet



Life, Spiritual: The relationship with God, attained by baptism and strengthened through reception of sacraments, prayer, mortification and charitable works.

Love of God: The greatest Christian virtue, enabling one to respond to God as He does

to us: with charity. We are commanded to love God because of all He has done for us, especially for the charity of Christ shown in His death and resurrection. To love God makes loving our neighbors possible.

Love of Neighbor: Charity, desiring the true good of others. Because of our love for God, we can then love others. This mandate means to love enemies, as well as friends. One grows in fraternal charity especially through the reception of the sacraments.

Source: OSV's Catholic Dictionary. Visit www.graceinaction.org for stewardship alphabet's letters A-K.



kids corner Savor seasons greetings



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To make a Christmas card holder, you will need a shoe box, contact paper or wrapping paper, glue, Christmas tinsel or ribbon and Christmas stickers. First, cover the box with contact paper or wrapping paper. Print "God bless our friends and family" or "We are thankful for friends and family" on a piece of paper, and glue that to the box. Decorate the box with tinsel, ribbon, stickers.

Keep the holder on or near the dinner table. Each night, choose a card to read as a family. Share the meaning and illustration on the card. Then pray for the people or person who sent you the card.



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Merry Christmas
from
Grace in Action!



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