

*Full of  
God's  
Goodness*

*True Gifts  
come from  
generosity*



**Teaching**  
**the Way of Love**  
Because humanity passes by way of the family...

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## Authentic Gifts

### PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will cultivate generosity within their family.
- Parents will fill their home with high love and high demands.
- Parents will show virtue in their home and at work.
- All children will know the security of true love from their parents.
- Families will celebrate Christ's birth throughout the Christmas season.
- Parents will teach their children the value of sacrifice and generosity.
- Faith, hope and charity will flourish within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's loves and mercy.

We are in the thick of the holiday season. This is the time of year when the media and culture inundate us with commercials and messages to buy gifts. The frenzy begins on Black Friday and ends on Christmas day. Business want you to buy into (literally) the idea that you have to give everyone a gift before the year ends.

But, why do we give gifts? That is a very good question! The answer is dependent on the source you Google. For example, social scientists will tell you that gift giving is a widely practiced and essential component of human relationships. The most common reason for gifting is to create a bond with the recipient; some gifts represent friendship, while others communicate love or congratulations. Another reason to give gifts is obligation (e.g. they are getting me something so I have to give them something). Still others exchange gifts because it is part of the holiday ritual.

Relationship experts have a slightly nuanced take on the exchange. While they recommend giving gifts, they warn the recipient to explore the reason behind the gift. These whizzes suggest a scrutiny of the motives of the giver; are they trying to manipulate or control; are they being affectionate; are they trying to be funny? They encourage people to value the gift based on the intent.



Both of these explanations contain some truth. Social scientists are correct when they say that gifts create a bond between the giver and the receiver. And the relationship gurus are right when they say gifts have meaning. But, there is more to consider than just the bond and the meaning. Gifts should first and foremost symbolize a generous heart.

When the Catholic faith uses the term gift it often refers to the gratuitous love of God. In this context, gifts express abundance, goodness and totality. An authentic gift is freely given without any expectation of getting something in return. And, it usually contains some element of sacrifice.

***Because humanity passes by way of the family...***

Two of the best examples of authentic gift giving are found in the birth and death of Jesus. Christ came to us as a gift from the Father. He was given to us so that we would visibly see the love of God. He was given to us to form a bond between the creator and His creatures. He was given totally, with no expectation of getting something in return.

The death of Christ reflects the sacrificial element of gift giving. After a life filled with holiness, humility and gentle guidance, Christ gave himself up for our redemption. He held nothing back. His “gift of self” gave us the promise of salvation and eternal life.

Let’s think for a moment at your gift giving philosophy and how it might change when you add the dimensions of generosity and sacrifice. Might you change your buying habits? Might you give your gifts in a different manner? Might you increase your “gifts of self” and decrease store bought presents?

The secular world is trying to get you to think Xmas rather than Christmas. Sadly, the voice of consumerism has the potential to silence the voice of God. You, however, can distance or reject their message in favor of a more meaningful exchange of gifts. Prepare for Christmas and the reception of the ultimate gift of our Savior with a “gift of self” approach. Give generously. Give sacrificially. Give from your heart.

## Discover God’s Goodness in December

Authentic gifts come from a generous heart that is ready to sacrifice. Here are a number of ideas that can transform your ideas about gift giving.

- Before you buy, consider the person receiving your gift. Ask the question, “what would make my relationship with the person move forward?” Asking and answering this question can help you find a personal and perfect gift that shows them how you care.
- Add someone to your list who would never expect a gift from you. It might be an estranged relative or a neighbor or a co-worker. Find a way to “gift” them with a sign of your presence.
- Did someone on your list request a very specific gift; something they really want that is going to be hard to give? Pray about the request and do your best to meet the necessary sacrifice required to give what they want.
- When you purchase gifts, find a way to personalize them. If you buy someone a book, write a note inside the front cover. Tie a poem or bible quote on the box rather than a bow. Share a favorite recipe and tuck it inside the box. Add photos of you and the recipient that will remind them of your affection for them.
- For those who are very close to you, consider a “change of habit” gift. This is a total gift of self because it can’t be purchased. It has to come from your heart. Consider giving someone you love the courtesy of putting your clothes away when you take them off or cleaning up the bathroom after each use. Perhaps you could give them a commitment to turn the volume down on the TV or limiting social media to 3 days a week. Perhaps you might give them your total and undivided attention each time they talk to you.

**This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.**

**This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at [www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love](http://www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love).**