

VIEWPOINTS

Get On Your Holly Jolly

BY PAULA DAMON

This time of year, everyone's got their holly jolly going on and quite frankly it's starting to get to me. People are running around creating frenetic gift-giving mobs everywhere.

Except for the guys, of course. Pardon me if I sound stereotypical, but most guys I know don't have a clue as to what to get their wives for Christmas.

Part of the problem is they really don't listen to their better halves.

Even so, it seems no amount of subtle or direct hints really make a difference to men. They somehow manage to remain out of touch as to the perfect gifts for the special ladies in their lives.

What makes it worse is that guys wait until the last minute to go out and get a crazy kitchen handheld appliance they find piled high at Younkers or a pair of crocodile slippers on clearance at Kohl's.

Guys, take it from me, give your wife something romantic.

What? Romantic?

Yes, romantic. Let's get with the program. For eons women have loved anything romantic.

Arrange for a candlelit dinner at a swanky restaurant. And please, please dress up. Those work pants and T-shirt simply won't do.

Surprise her with a dozen roses just because.

Really?

Yes, really. Are you not listening to me?

Book a long weekend for two at a nearby resort. Keep in mind; having the kids tag along is not an option. Get a baby sitter. If you can't afford one, offer to watch a friend's kids if they do the same for you.

Give her a spa day gift certificate. Nothing says I love you to the moon and back like pampering your sweetie.

Hire a house cleaner once a month for a year. Wouldn't that be nice! [Gee, I hope my husband is reading this.]

Give her what she's always dreamed of. Whether it's a round-trip ticket to a Caribbean paradise of Belize, a girl's night out on the town or a shopping spree with a half-dozen gift cards to spend however she likes. Like Nike always says, just do it.

Remember, don't buy a thing at Victoria's Secret. Come on, guys, admit it, the only reasons you go in there is for a sneak peek at those giant posters of scantily clad 20-something women.

Besides, if she's anything like most of the gals I know, her "sexy" days are long gone.

When you put stuff like that under the tree, you're just asking for trouble. She's not going to wear it and it puts too much pressure on her [how should I say it] to perform. The last thing you want is to put pressure on her to do one more thing she's the least interested in doing.

Here are some romantic gifts you don't have to wrap. Hang mistletoe from every threshold in the house. In case you're too young to know the significance of mistletoe, it's for smooching.

Whisper sweet nothings in her ear...repeat after me: "You are beautiful!"

"I wouldn't want to be with anyone but you."

"I'm the luckiest guy in the world to have you."

Hold her hand.

By golly, guys, follow my instructions and you'll have a holly jolly Christmas this year.

Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning writer whose columns appear weekly in regional newspapers in the Upper Midwest. The author conducts readings of her works and writing workshops for beginning writers. For more information, email boscodamon.paula@gmail.com.



PAULA DAMON



The Artist: Dan S. Sparks

Making Christmas Joy Outshine Our Troubled World

BY PAUL F. MORRISSEY

The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

On Christmas Eve, my brothers and sisters and I would sing, "Tomorrow will be Christmas, and we will sing; So early in the morning, the sweet church bells will ring." No one ever sings that carol now, but it is still in my memory from more than 60 years ago.

It was the 1950s, and the earliest Mass then was at 5 a.m. I was a choirboy, and as I hustled across the street in the frosty morning air with the red cassock, starched white surplice, thick celluloid collar and the crimson silk ribbon bow tie, I stole a glance upward at the stars as the church bells rang.

Imagining Jesus born in a stable thousands of years before, I hoped in a young kid's way that I might even spot some angels. I also wondered with anticipation what I might find under the tree when I got home.

We were not allowed to look at our presents until after Mass. Our parents would make us all go to bed, then put up a tree from scratch (no artificial ones then), assemble model trains on a platform, and small piles of presents for my many siblings _ practical stuff like socks and underwear along with a toy, and occasionally for a lucky one, a repainted second-hand bike from a neighbor.

It was all magical and wonderful, even if the tree fell over on a rambunctious younger brother later in the day.

I'm a priest now and we still celebrate Christmas in a big way, even though our parents are gone home to God.

On Christmas Eve, we gather at my sister's house for carols around the neighborhood first, then a Mass in the living room, followed by gifts (not the big emphasis now) and lots of delicious potluck food from the siblings and their children.

It is a bit challenging trying to pull off Mass reverently with 30 or more people around a coffee table altar in the living room, surrounded by young children vying to be my altar girls, with their parents _ my nieces and nephews for the most part _ looking on with bemusement. These are the practicing Catholics.

Others, of varying or no involvement with the Church, sit in the room farther back, many of them young adults. In the room farthest back, are those who may belong to other churches _ a Buddhist or two and possibly some agnostics. Occasional laughter spills from this farthest room into the living room as we sing "O Holy Night."

As I prepare for this year's gathering, I wonder how I can offer a few words after the Christmas Gospel that will touch my family, especially the young adults. It is such a challenging time when so much is happening in the world that breeds fear.

Were Mary and Joseph afraid, I wonder? If not when Mary had to give birth in a stable, then surely when they soon had to escape Herod and

seek a possible home in Egypt.

What are people's fears today? The kids squatting in front of me, their eyes aglow in the candlelight _ are they afraid? Are their young parents around the altar more afraid than the young adults in the back room because they have kids? What can I say to them that is real?

Something about joy wants to be my message. A joy that overcomes fear. The joy that the angels announced to the shepherds. The joy that Isaiah's voice still rings through the ages in Pope Francis' "The Joy of the Gospel." The joy that a simple faith stirs up in a believing heart, that God came to Earth on this night long ago to claim a place among us _ not above us.

Don't we all desire this belief, even if our lives and the world's cynicism scoff at our childhood hope on this special night?

Mary and Joseph may have fled in fear with their child to Egypt, yet with a joy that was deeper and more powerful because the little boy they clutched needed his mother's milk like the rest of us.

The Word became flesh, became human.

It can be the same for us if we allow our own humanity to be claimed by God on Christmas Eve. We might remember then our forgotten child's song, "Tomorrow will be Christmas, and we will carols sing; So early in the morning, the sweet church bells will ring."

A SINCERE THANK YOU

We want to thank you all for your support of our work at the Baby Closet. We have been active with providing families with diapers and wipes, clothing, and a variety of baby items in 2015. We gave away many packs of diapers in the past year to families in need. We have seen the amount of people accessing the baby closet and the diapers and wipes increase this year. We would like to thank the following businesses and organizations who supported the Baby Closet financially in 2015. Knutson Family Dentistry, First Bank and Trust, Sanford Health Services, along with other friends and private donors who have been so generous to support this

work. Your donations went solely to the purchase of diapers and wipes. We also want to thank all those who donated clothing, larger baby items (such as cribs, swings, toys). Without your help the ministry of the baby closet would not be as effective in helping families in need.

The Baby Closet is open to all families in the community. It is open on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 10:00AM to Noon and by appointment by calling 624-2921 and leaving a message. Families are able to get a package of diapers per month for each child in diapers and a package of wet wipes. We have a wide variety of baby and children's clothes available. We

also carry children's clothes, sizes 5-14 as donations come in. Donations of money (for diapers and wipes only), clothing, (other baby items, or time to help with organizing, are all accepted and appreciated. Checks can be made out to the Baby Closet. Donations are tax deductible and can be mailed to Faith Fellowship Church P.O. Box 384 Vermillion, SD 57069. Also you can call 624-4116 to arrange a time to drop off any donations or with any questions.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR. PASTOR TONY ARMBRUST FAITH FELLOWSHIP OF THE OPEN BIBLE

SOUTH DAKOTA NEEDS YOU

There's something wrong in our state government. Call it incompetence or corruption if you like but five victims were killed related to government programs. We obviously need change and in all levels of South Dakota government.

What kind of leaders do we need? People who volunteer because they care about others whether its at the local food pantry, Welcome Table, coaching baseball, or being a big brother or sister. These are the people who make

our communities work because they know how to get things done.

If you are one of these we need you to step up now. You can run for your local school board, county commission, city council, mayor, or state legislature depending on how much time you wish to commit. Just pick an office and run for it.

You can learn more about the various offices at the Secretary of States website <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/upcoming-elections/>

general-information/default.aspx. All the information you need is there.

Many open offices are non-partisan so you don't have to run as either a Republican or Democrat. Just run!

If you must run as a member of a political party contact your county chairperson. They're looking for you.

MARK WINEGAR VERMILLION, SD

Something bugging you?

E-mail a letter to the editor: shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net