

Stewards of God's Grace: December 2020

It's December. Thinking about Gifts?

We are in the season of Advent—a season of anticipation and yearning for the fullness of God's reign with the second coming of Christ. In the church we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child and the gift of the incarnate Emmanuel, God with us. In the world around us people prepare to celebrate the feast of Christmas with friends and family, food and festivity. Woven through both the church's and society's celebration of Christmas is the giving of gifts.



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But what are gifts? In her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes “A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning. It is not a reward; you cannot earn it, or call it to you, or even deserve it. And yet it appears. Your only role is to be open-eyed and present.” She also says that “gifts from the earth or from each other establish a particular relationship, an obligation of sorts, to give, to receive, and to reciprocate.” Certainly when we consider God's gift of grace to us in Jesus Christ we know that it is not earned or deserved. God's grace is to be received, to be shared with others, and to be acknowledged in our life as disciples and stewards of that grace.

Perhaps we could consider the gifts we give and receive this month as vehicles for building relationships and caring for others. Whether we are giving to our circle of family and friends, to our parish or diocese, or to a church outreach or development agency may we consciously give with the intent of sharing God's love and mercy. To help you do this here are some prayers for the giving and receiving of gifts.

To others: Loving God, as I wrap this gift for *N*, may what I give and how I give it, strengthen our relationship and show my love for them. This I pray in the name of Jesus, your gift to us. Amen.

From others: Holy One, as I open this gift, may I see within the giving the love and care of the giver. Help me to receive with an open and grateful heart. This I pray in the name of Jesus, your gift to us. Amen.

To the church or Christian charity: Almighty God, may this gift of my financial resources become more than money. May it be a vehicle for revealing your glory, mercy and love for all. In Christ's name. Amen.