



Like many men, I often myself clicking the remote through the probably more than 200 televisions stations, only to find no movie, news story, or sporting event that captures my attention. In such a case I often find myself watching reruns of *Everyone Loves Raymond*, a show that I never watched when it was originally on television years ago. On a recent Christmas episode it told a story where there was a conversation between Robert, my favorite character, and his mother Marie. Robert was as usual complaining that Raymond was always her favorite. Robert mentioned a Christmas memory from his childhood: Raymond got a great set of toys and all Rober received was a pair of very large orthopedic shoes. Marie responded, *Robbie, they were so expensive because they were a size 17!*

I hope you were happy with the Christmas gifts that you gave and received. My family has all but given up on giving me any other gift than Amazon gift cards since that is what I tell them what I want when they ask me what I would like for Christmas. Our family Christmas routine is to wait for Uncle Pat to come home from wherever he is saying Masses and then begin opening the gifts. There is mad swirl of wrapping paper flying, with lots of thank you's, I love it, it is perfect, and how did you know I wanted and then a great burst come forth from toy instruments and electronic games that little ones have recieved, and a rush to hide when one of the kids ask if someone can help put their Lego set together.

Before the official gift giving begins, I often give out some my old clothes, books, and videos that I no longer need to the family. Since only a few of them have the great muscular build that I have, some of the kids feel disappointed since I have little that interests them. I did give one of my college age great-nieces marble book ends that had belonged to my late Sister Geraldine. Micaela was thrilled to have them. A moment later, she saw her younger cousin Fiona who was disappointed since I really had nothing that I thought she would like. She did not complain but Micaela noticed and said, *Fiona, you can have one book end and I will have the other and that we can share the memory of our Aunt Gerry.* Perfect. Her act of sharing was a gift to the whole family and it brought a tear to my eyes.

When all the official Christmas gifts were given, and the smell of turkey filled our living room, and before my sister called us to the table, she said she had one more gift to give. She said to her oldest nephew, a senior in college, Thomas, *you are the oldest and I am giving you my husband Jack's wedding ring. You can wear it or not. When you get married, you can use or get a new one, but I want you to have it. Jack pushed you in a carriage when you were a baby.* Thomas, who is wonderful young man with a kind of strong masculine Clint Eastwood exterior, cried for about ten minutes.

This past Christmas, as has always been my experience here at St. Martin's, parishioners are very kind to the clergy with gifts of Christmas cards and emails, their kind words and greetings, promises of prayers, their delicious desserts, Irish spirits, and so many other kinds of very thoughtful gifts. I can assure you they all are appreciated. This Christmas was a little bit different; so many parishioners told us, *we will miss you guys so much.* They were words full of love and appreciation. What a great gift to be loved and valued and to hear it so spoken so lovingly.

Three gifts: a wedding ring, bookends, and words of love. They were to me gold, frankincense and myrrh. I tell you these stories because I invite you to look over your Christmas days and see where you were touched by the love of God either as you saw it in others or experienced it yourself. It may have come at moment when you least expected it or you may only begin to

see it now, as you look back and say, that was a very a very special moment.

We call this Sunday *The Epiphany* which is the Greek word to make manifest. The great Irish writer, James Joyce, talks about *epiphanies, those moments when we see or experience something we never noticed before.* When we have our children's Christmas pageant here at St. Martin's, the role that the children most ask to play is surprisingly not Mary or Joseph, but the one who gets to carry the star over Bethlehem. This great feast where Magi from East follow the star is core to Good News of the Christian message: Jesus is for all people of every nation, language, culture, or nationality. I spoke about three times when I saw the Star of the Epiphany, of God's love made manifest. The star is not just for Christmas. The word on our Advent/Christmas button this year was *Emmanuel. Emmanuel means God with us in the beautiful moments of life, in the humdrum days of January and February, and even in the sadness of suffering and loss. God with us: Emmanuel.* My brothers and sisters, the star is over the pulpit as we hear the Word of God, over the table of the Eucharist as we received his body and blood, over the people in our church, over the parish, and over the whole world. *God with us.* I will end with the words of a favorite author of mine named John Shea:

*We bring gold for he will bring people into their true worth*

*We bring incense for he will reconcile people to God.*

*We bring myrrh for his death will be our path to new life.*

*The truth is the child*

*Waiting to be found*

*If you know how to look*