



***It is in Giving that We Receive ...*** (Prayer of St. Francis)

**By Kathleen Tobin**

Every year in December our parish has a Gift Giving Mass to collect gifts for a nearby parish that has many young families in need. The Mass is celebrated by their pastor and their choir joins ours adding festive Spanish songs to the Mass. This year, I entered the Church to drop off our gift (since the Mass was canceled due to Covid) and saw the pews in the back of the church filled with boxes and bags of gifts and some small bicycles and tricycles. As always, it brought tears to my eyes to see so many generous people sharing even in the midst of such a challenging year. I imagine the joy on the children's faces as they open up such wonderful gifts and the joy that fills their parents' hearts to be able to give them to their children.

My husband and I married later in life and in our first year of marriage we lost our only child to miscarriage. That first Christmas afterward, I was so broken hearted that I bought two tiny baby outfits to donate to a mother in need in honor of our baby. But since the opportunity to donate them to a local organization never worked out, frustrated, I put them in a closet and forgot about them. Then, we learned about our parish Gift Giving Mass, and I knew the opportunity was perfect! We wrapped the tiny outfits in Christmas wrap and brought them to the Mass, where they were placed all around the front of the church during the offertory.

During the homily, the priest told a story about a newly married couple from his parish who had struggled and suffered very much trying to start a family. They had several miscarriages and were so devastated that they had begun to lose hope. They wanted to have a family so much, they started looking into adoption. Father asked them to hold off on adopting. He asked them to pray the Rosary daily and to entrust their intention of having a baby to Our Lady of Guadalupe. One year later, the couple was expecting twins around the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe! And I thought, "Our present is two baby outfits, maybe precisely for this couple!" My heart was filled with joy!

So each year now, we purchase a Christmas gift for a child the age that our child would be that year. We remember our baby and the hole that is left in our hearts is gradually healing by the joy of giving his gift to another child in need and imagining the joy on their faces as they open the gift.

May this Advent be a time of healing and grace, as we prepare for the ultimate gift of God's only begotten Son.



Kathleen Tobin, residing in Bucks County PA, is a graduate from the University of Scranton with a BS in Physical Therapy, has worked for the Church, both nationally and internationally, and with her husband Shawn has been a Marriage Prep instructor for both Agape Ministries and Ascension Press and founded Catholic Beads & More, which sells handcrafted Rosaries, chaplets and other religious products.

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