

'Long walk is part of the gift'

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IT ALREADY has begun. Our gathering of Christmas gifts starts in November and rolls on for another month.

For some, this period is an orgy of buying. We spend money for gifts that we would never dream of buying at any other time of the year.

Some call this a "commercialization" of the religious holiday. We can get caught up in buying ever more beautiful objects that become reflections of our own need for importance. After Jan. 1, some will face the tragic results of their spending when they attempt to pay for what they purchased.

GIFT GIVING is an important part of life. We all need to give and receive gifts. Many emotions are connected with these acts. We feel surprise, expectancy, joy and gratitude through giving and receiving gifts.

I remember the story of an old person living alone who had a dog in the house. The greatest pleasure of this single person was the opportunity to give affection, food and love to this dog. For this lonely person, it was more important to be able to give to her dog than to receive.

Our memories are full of occasions when we were given a very special gift. Friendship and love need expression through giving gifts. We give because we need to give of ourselves to others.

This need to give can be perverted into an attempt to control another person by our gifts. Giving can be trading rather than giving without



Moral perspectives

Rev. David Strong

strings attached. Even though things can go wrong with our giving, it still remains central in our caring for others.

WHAT IS giving? It is our need to give of ourselves.

Our customs of giving at Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries have root in the need built within us to express our care through actions and objects.

In some cultures gifts are given every time people visit one another. Gifts become a way in which people say hello and goodbye.

What truly counts about a gift is not the gift, but the meaning of the gift. Small gifts may be a symbol of a deep love more than might be expressed by a large, expensive gift.

Gifts that are handmade or finished by hand often have a special meaning because personal creativity is a part of the gift.

A STORY comes to mind.

A teacher from America went to Africa to assist in educating young people. At Christmas one of his young students came to give the teacher a present. The gift was a very beautiful sea shell. The teacher

was very pleased. He remarked about how unusual the shell was. "Where did you find this shell?" he asked.

The student replied that this shell can only be found on a beach some 30 miles from his village. The teacher told the student that he appreciated the gift especially because it was so difficult to obtain this sea shell.

The student replied, "The long walk is part of the gift." The significance of a gift is in the meaning of giving it and the meaning of receiving it.

ALL HUMAN gifts are relative. Our motives in giving cannot escape being mixed.

There can be self-importance, the desire to dominate or to compensate for something one has or has not done. A gift to another can really be a gift to oneself. Nevertheless, both our giving and our hunger to receive gifts are signs of something beyond us.

They point to a truth beyond us: Life itself is a gift we receive, and a gift we can give.

It takes a lot of living and growing to realize that each minute, each sight and each sound is a gift of God. This greatest gift of all is a totally generous gift, with no strings attached.

The poet affirms that everything that is truly worthy in this world is free. In one sense this is true.

YET LIFE is not simply beautiful and unbroken. The greatest gifts are given by the healers, those who bind up the broken.

Christmas is a time we celebrate one who healed, who sought to offer life and healing back to persons who had lost this gift. If we believe the saying "Wherever there is love, there is God," every gift given in love shares in this reality.

We need to plan, purchase or make our Christmas gifts with love. In a sense, God's presence is expressed through this love and in our awareness that we are participating in the greatest act in life, giving. Gifts can heal. Gifts can transmit life.

We have a wonderful opportunity at this season to understand and practice the true meaning of giving.

EYE CARE

Gordon R.A. Fishman, MD
Diplomat of the American Board of Ophthalmology



GLAUCOMA

Historic records show that even the ancient Greeks were affected by glaucoma. Actually, the name comes from a Greek word meaning "hard eye." The Greeks only knew that patients with glaucoma had a hard, painful eye. They did not know the hardness and pain came from increased pressure within the eye. In glaucoma, the trabeculum becomes blocked, and the watery aqueous produced in the eye fails to drain out of the eye. As the volume of aqueous increases, so does the pressure within the eye. To relieve the condition, you must either decrease the amount of watery aqueous, or create an opening that will drain the fluid out of the eye.

The most common form of glaucoma is usually treated with drops. These drops may either open the spongy trabeculum to increase the drainage or they may decrease the production of aqueous inside the eye. Either way, the pressure is lowered and the glaucoma is controlled. Recently, doctors have been able to treat glaucoma with lasers by burning tiny holes in the spongy trabeculum. If drops and laser treatment fail to lower the pressure, a permanent hole can be made with surgery.

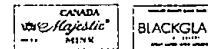
Glaucoma is hereditary and an eye examination is necessary to detect its presence. Unfortunately, there are few symptoms to warn you if glaucoma is present. Intermittent eye aches, eye pain and halos around lights at night may be early signs. There are special tests which may detect glaucoma even before a rise in pressure is noticed. Ask your eye doctor to perform these tests, especially if there is glaucoma in your family.

For your FREE copy of Dr. Fishman's brochure "EYE CARE" write to him at 1777 Axtell Rd., Troy, MI 48064 or 23700 Orchard Lake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48024

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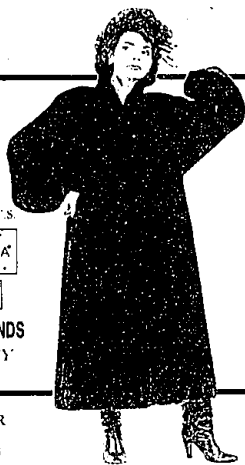
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