



Pastor's Pen

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- Fr. Tom Wilson, Pastor

GIFTS

If you have been at All Saints for a while, you know that I take my obligation for gift giving to my goddaughter, Lydia, seriously. I take pains to make sure that I get her a better gift than her godmother. I think I have succeeded, but it hasn't always been received that way. When Lydia was about four, (she's twelve now), I purchased a great gift, a life insurance policy from one of our Catholic fraternal companies. It's practical, long lasting, and doesn't take up any space. The problem is that at age four, Lydia didn't yet understand what an excellent gift it was and thought the princess doll from her godmother was far more interesting. I learned my lesson. Objectivity can sometimes lose out to perception.

Since then, I have focused on combining objectivity with the perception. It hasn't always worked, but sometimes it does. Lydia's reaction to gifts has changed as she has matured. She is always polite and grateful for what she gets, no matter who gives it to her. She may have a more immediate use for one gift than another, but gratitude is her typical posture, which is to be expected considering how her parents are raising her.

She is also confident in her gift givers. One year when I solicited ideas from her for a Christmas gift, she asked for a pony. I did my due diligence and researched the cost of ponies, only to find out that they were way out of my affordability range. In conversing with her mother, I learned Lydia was realistic about my ability to pay for a pony, but she told her she knew I would try, and she got the message out to a wider group of gift givers than just me. Lydia had confidence in those who give her gifts, that if she made her desires known, she might get her pony. I think she truly believed she would get her pony eventually. She did. Her parents found a deal on a pony named Buddy (not really a pony but a small horse) that Lydia cared for and competed with. She was ecstatic!

Lydia's maturity and well-known and refined interests reduce the pressure on the gift givers. It's a lot easier giving her something useful, cool, and appreciated now than it was when she was four. In a way, the gifts have changed very little over time. Both her godmother and I seek to get her things she can use, will like and appreciate. What has changed, and ratcheted down the competition between godfather and godmother, is Lydia. Her view of the world is different. Her politeness and gratitude for anything she gets take the pressure off both of us.

In this model case, the gifts really haven't changed, the givers may have changed some, but it is the receiver who has really changed. This could easily be an analogy to our relationship with God. God has never been outdone in generosity and the outpouring of gifts to His people. However, sometimes we overlook them, don't appreciate them, or just don't use them. The change that is required is not the gifts, nor the giver, but the receiver. It's not hard to see. If we neither know nor appreciate a gift, it is impossible to use.

Lydia's godmother and I combine an approach of intuitively knowing some of what Lydia likes, anticipating what she might need, and using our own wisdom about what might be best as a gift for her. Hopefully the combination will arrive at a purchasing conclusion, that on Christmas Day, has Lydia appreciative, joy-filled, and anticipating how she will use the gifts, some of which she could easily anticipate and others not.

My goddaughter's gifts are no different from the gifts God gives to us. We ask and receive, even if what we asked for may not be received. We may get something much better that we don't even recognize. Failing to recognize them likely leads to not using them. On January 26, All Saints will host *Called and Gifted*, a seminar helping us to learn both our spiritual gifts (charisms) and how we can use them. Learning and using them will help us in our own anticipated joy and serve the Kingdom of God. See the website for full details.

In this season of joyful giving, plan to take some time to discover what you may not know you have and be grateful to God the giver by using them for His glory and kingdom.