

The Handmade Tablecloth

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished.

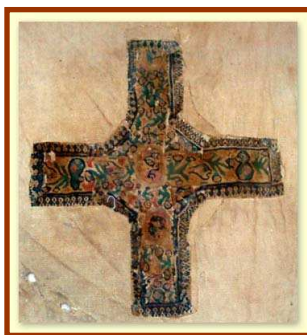
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On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a bit of a flea market sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the

items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center.



It was just the right size he thought, to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later.

She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was white like a sheet. 'Pastor,' she asked, 'where did you get that tablecloth?' The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were.

These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well to do people in Austria.

When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and she never saw her husband or her home again. The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church.



The pastor insisted on driving her home that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job. What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.



One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike. He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier.

He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

True Story - submitted by Pastor Rob Reid Brooklyn, New York



Sacrifice of Love

Adapted from:
"The Gift of the Magi" (1906)

Author: O'Henry (1862-1910)

One cold winter Christmas Eve,

there was a family who lived in the slums of Brooklyn. The family lived in an old run down apartment, that was really only suitable for rats.

The wife whose name was Delia Young, wanted to buy a chain for her husbands damaged watch, but did not have enough money. She was frantic and overwhelmed with panic. She did not know what to do. Her Christmas would be ruined! She thought and thought, until she came up with an idea. She decided to sell her hair at the local salon.

She entered the salon and was quickly examined by the stylist. The hair stylist was astonished in not finding damaged or liced hair. The wife and the stylist bargained and bargained. It resulted in the wife receiving \$20.00 for her hair, which was just enough to buy the chain. Delia looked at herself and saw that she looked hideous without hair, but she did not care and cloaked her head with a shawl.

She quickly searched and purchased the desired chain and left for home. She wrapped the chain in newspaper

and sat quietly awaiting her husband, Jim's return from work that afternoon.

When Jim got home and entered the house, Delia could see that he had a grin on his face. After dinner, they sat next to the stove for warmth. Delia then pulled out her gift and gave it to Jim her husband. He looked confused, but opened it. He was in tears when he saw the gift, because he had sold his watch to buy a gift for Delia. He pulled out his gift, which was a set of hair brushes for his wife's delicate hair. Both Jim and Delia cried and wept together.

The love that they had for each other proved that they would sacrifice anything it took to see happiness upon their partner.



I am sure that most of you are familiar with; "The Gift of the Magi." No matter how many times it is told around Christmas each year, it is a story that never seems to grow old. Through the selfless example of the love and devotion of a couple for one another, we are brought back to the true meaning of Christmas.

Through the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas time, we are reminded that love came here to save us.



A Small White Envelope

Submitted by:

Marilyn Jensen

I got this from a friend and don't know the author



It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas---oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it---overspending... the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma---the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church, mostly black. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them

together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them."

Mike loved kids---all kids---and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came.

That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition---one year sending a group of mentally

handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there.

You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more.

Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope. Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us.

May we all remember Christ, who is the reason for the season and the true Christmas spirit this year and for always. God bless.



A Doll for my Sister

I hurried into the local department store to grab some last minute Christmas gifts. I looked at all the people and grumbled to myself. I would be in here forever and I just had so much to do. Christmas was beginning to become such a drag. I kind of wished that I could just sleep through Christmas. But I hurried the best I could through all the people to the toy department. Once again I kind of mumbled to myself at the prices of all these toys and wondered if the grandkids would even play with them.



I found myself in the doll aisle. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a little boy about 5 holding a lovely doll. He kept touching her hair and he held her so gently. I could not seem to help myself. I just kept looking over at the little boy and wondered who the doll was for. I watched him turn to a woman and he called his aunt by name and said, "Are you sure I don't have enough money" She replied a bit impatiently, "You know that you don't have enough money for it. The aunt told the little boy not to go anywhere that she had to go get some other things and would be back in a few minutes. And then she left the aisle. The boy continued to hold the doll.

After a bit I asked the boy who the doll was for. He said, "It is the doll my sister wanted so badly for Christmas.

She just knew that Santa would bring it." I told him that maybe Santa was going to bring it. He said "No, Santa can't go where my sister is...I have to give the doll to my Momma to take to her". I asked him where his sister was.

He looked at me with the saddest eyes and said "She has gone to be with Jesus". My Daddy says that Momma is going to have to go be with her. My heart nearly stopped beating. Then the boy looked at me again and said, "I told my Daddy to tell Momma not to go yet. I told him to tell her to wait till I got back from the store". Then he asked me if I wanted to see



his picture. I told him I would love to. He pulled out some pictures he'd had taken at the front of the store. He said "I want my Momma to take this with her so she don't ever forget me." "I love my Momma so very much and I wish she did not have to leave me". "But Daddy says she will need to be with my sister."

I saw that the little boy had lowered his head and had grown so very quiet. While he was not looking I reached into my purse and pulled out a handfull of bills. I asked the little boy, "Shall we count that money one more

time?" He grew excited and said "Yes, I just know it has to be enough". So I slipped my money in with his and we began to count it.

Of course it was plenty for the doll. He softly said, "Thank you Jesus for giving me enough money."



Then the boy said "I just asked Jesus to give me enough money to buy this doll so Momma can take it with her to give to my sister." "And he heard my prayer". "I wanted to ask him for enough to buy my Momma a white rose, but I didn't ask him, but he gave me enough to buy the doll and a rose for my Momma." "She loves white roses so very, very much".

In a few minutes the aunt came back and I wheeled my cart away. I could not keep from thinking about the little boy as I finished my shopping in a totally different spirit than when I had started. And I kept remembering a story I had seen in the newspaper several days earlier about a drunk driver hitting a car and killing a little girl and the Mother was in serious condition. The family was deciding on whether to remove the life support. Now surely this little boy did not belong with that story.

Two days later I read in the paper where the family had disconnected the life support and the young woman had died. I could not



forget the little boy and just kept wondering if the two were somehow connected. Later that day, I could not help myself and I went out and bought some white roses and took them to the funeral home where the young woman was. And there she was holding a lovely white rose, the beautiful doll, and the picture of the little boy in the store.

I left there in tears, my life changed forever. The love that little boy had for his little sister and his mother was overwhelming. And in a split second a drunk driver had ripped the life of that little boy to pieces. "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

Submitted by: John London



Grandpa's Christmas Story

Grandpa decided that shopping for Christmas presents had become too difficult. All his grandchildren had everything they needed, so he decided to send them each a cheque.

On each card he wrote:

'Happy Christmas Grandpa'

P.S. 'Buy your own present!'

While Grandpa enjoyed the family festivities, he thought that his grandchildren were just slightly distant. It preyed on his mind into the New Year. Then, one day, he was sorting out his study and under a pile of magazines; he found a little pile of checks for his grandchildren. He had completely forgotten to put them in with the Christmas cards.

Christmas Turkey

It was Christmas Eve in at the meat counter and a woman was anxiously picking over the last few remaining turkeys in the hope of finding a large one.

In desperation she called over a shop assistant and said, 'Excuse me. Do these turkeys get any bigger?'

'No, madam, 'he replied, 'they're all dead.'

Short Funny Christmas Story

Just before Christmas, by coincidence, an honest politician, a generous lawyer and Santa Claus got into an elevator together at the Ritz-Carleton Hotel in New York. As the elevator travelled from the 5th floor down to the ground level, one-by-one they noticed a \$100 bill lying on the elevator floor.

Which one picked up the \$100 bill, and handed it in at reception?

Santa of course, the other two don't actually exist!

The Christmas Hold-up

It was Christmas Eve; the department store manager was in his office just paying off Father Christmas. All of a sudden a teenager and ordered the manager to hand-over the not inconsiderable takings.

The manager was wondering what to do, so the teenager attempted to fire his gun in order to make the manager's mind, and open the till and hand over the money. Although the robber pulled the trigger, nothing happened, so unbelievably, he peered down the barrel and then fired again.

This time it worked.

