



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

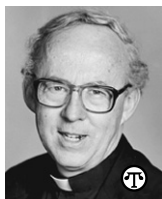
THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

How to Have a Good Christmas Today

Val J. Peter, JCD, STD

(NAPSA)—Do you remember the warm, wonderful feelings Christmas brought to you as a child? While we can't go back to our childhoods, we can take steps to make this Christmas as warm and memorable as those of our childhood.



Val J. Peter

When I think back, the thing I remember most is that deep down in my heart I felt we were a family.

The closeness I felt with my family, combined with my own willingness to sacrifice for my parents, brothers and sister, allowed me to share with them and be grateful for the gifts they gave me.

It was the Depression. I remember saving my pennies so we could go together to buy mom a nice present. My dad helped, explaining to us that mom liked little bottles of perfume rather than big ones. I didn't understand the logic, but I trusted him.

Our family traditions were simple, thoughtful and fun. We did our best to prepare for Jesus' coming. We each had our own crib set, inexpensive, but our own. Every day, we tried to do a good deed for someone, and gained a piece of straw in our cribs for the effort.

Christmas Day was focused on a simple and festive meal. Mom made it with great care. Anything made with love and great care is worthy of honor. I felt privileged to sit at our family's table. I always felt we were famous in

God's eyes for our love and affection for each other. I believe that every family is famous in God's eyes for doing the same.

So how do we have a good Christmas in modern times?

First, we need to get in touch with those same feelings of family and friendship and make them come alive. Then, make a list of simple, thoughtful things to involve your family in this holiday. Don't forget to check it twice. Here are some suggestions for your list:

Saving for presents means saving to give something special to the poor. Put something away to help a needy family enjoy the holiday.

Sharing with brothers and sisters means volunteering. Help someone as a family. For example, ring the bell for the Salvation Army or join a Christmas choir.

Help each of your children get their own Christmas crib. Use it as an opportunity to share with them your faith and the importance of the holiday.

Plan a special activity that shares the warmth of the holiday with your family.

As a child in 1939, I remember hearing my mom and dad two days after Christmas saying they really wanted to do something nice for us before the season was over. They told us at supper that we would drive around together and look at Christmas tree lights. That might not seem like much to you, but I knew why they were doing it—they wanted to share their joy with us.

That is how you can make your Christmas joyful, too.