



A Christmas Story - Author Unknown

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 at this time of the year 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. You know, the 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. Shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner city church. The kids were 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 head gear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously couldn't 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. He understood kids in competitive situations, 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 challenged 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 - on and on...

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A Christmas Story



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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. Still, the story doesn't end there.

You see, we lost Mike last year due to cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. Yet 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 their envelopes.

Mike's spirit, like the spirit of Christmas, will always be with us.



Kids and angels



Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it.

Olive, age 9

When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to ten. And when he lets out his breath again, somewhere there's a tornado.

Reagan, age 10

My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on being an angel by helping me while she was still down here on earth.

Ashley, age 9

Our Food Pantry Supervisors say.....

"Thank you, St. George Parishioners!"

Just a few days before Thanksgiving, our parish Food Pantry volunteers were busy distributing eighty (yes, **80**) beautiful baskets of food to needy families of the St. George community.

Annette Wittmann and Barb Felix, supervisors of our Food Pantry operation, listed the following donations that made this remarkable distribution possible:

- * 27 turkeys were donated by parishioners
- * 47 turkeys came from the Second Harvest

Food Bank through a donation form Erie Insurance

- 746 food items (canned and packaged foods) were collected by students of St. George School

And finally, many parishioners made generous cash contributions totaling over \$300 for the food pantry through the Sunday collections.

Imagine what all of this did for 80 families that were assured of having a wonderful Thanksgiving. God bless all who made this possible.

As this newsletter was being prepared Annette and Barb had begun gathering supplies for the Christmas distribution. Although we don't know the details at this time, we are quite certain our parishioners would demonstrate their usual generosity for the Christmas baskets as well..

Annette and Barb and their crew of volunteers who help with the distribution thank you for your support.

Dear Jesus on this Christmas day
please clean our hearts, so that we
may become more worthy
of receiving you

Help us to follow your example and
help us to make this Christmas special
to all those who are not so fortunate
we.



Merry Christmas

