

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

It is at this time of the year that something magical seems to infect most people from every corner of the world:

*They want to feel inwardly happy;
They want to give, rather than to take;
They want to love, rather than to hate;
They want to revel in their joys
With everybody, the old, the young, the girls, the boys;
They want to forget yesterday's pain
And delight in watching the falling snow or rain;
They want to share in the pleasures of the day;
They want to dance, to sing, to play; and,
Love is in the air:
Everywhere.*

At no other time is the worldwide infection of happiness as strong as it is at this time of the year.

It is called Christmas.

Children, especially, love this time of the year. They take delight in such simple, little things, such as admiring a brightly adorned Christmas tree, sampling cookies and cakes, wrapped in fancy multi-coloured paper, dressing up in new clothes, complete with a little red hat. To children, without any thought of reward, recognition, or earning a profit, they want to be an integral part of this festive season for no other reason than to be known that they are part of this joyous time. They want to believe that love is everywhere and that everybody and everything is wonderful. How horrible it would be if children were excluded from Christmas! It is the innocence of a child that is so alluring to everybody. Once a child gazes upon presents, wrapped in red, blue, green or gold paper, with a little ribbon, holding the paper folds together, and, with the knowledge that one of the presents is especially for the child, the excitement of the moment seems to permeate every corner of the room. A mad dash and the child takes possession of the present and, with a yelp of joy that can be heard, seemingly for miles around, the child is bathed in love on learning the fact that somebody knows the child and that that somebody loves the child. It matters little what is the Christmas present that the child receives, be it a new pair of shoes, a box of chocolates, or a plastic toy gun or doll, it is enough that somebody demonstrates love and that that somebody thought of the child and took the trouble to bring the excitement of Christmas to that child. The monetary value of the present is immaterial – it is the present itself and the message that it brings to the child that is important. What could be more rewarding than to note the smile on a child's face as he or she opens a Christmas present and, from the child's mouth comes a very audible gasp of joy? And, if one is lucky enough to receive a hug from the child, what could be a sweeter gift?

The trouble is that children grow up. It is a pity, actually, because a child's first knowledge of Christmas is, perhaps, the best of all times since it is the promise that magic will fill the air. To the child, Santa Claus is not a European, an African, an Asian or any other race of man. Santa Claus is not a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Sikh or a member of any religious sect: Santa Claus is, simply, a personification of love, the giver of wondrous, lovely things. Santa Claus is ageless and is dressed in clothes that only he may wear as he travels the world, bringing joy to all living things. He knows only one language: The language of love.

I had the privilege of being present at a dinner in a restaurant, recently, and, in this restaurant, sitting not far from me, there was a young man who had just been handed a present by his girlfriend. It was clear that the couple was in love and that the girlfriend had put a great deal of thought into the gift that she had bought for her lover. Carefully, the young man unwrapped his gift, while the girlfriend, deftly took possession of the wrapping paper, folding it up, neatly, as it was peeled off the box which contained a new leather wallet. The man reached over, clasped his lady's hand and, looking a little sheepishly round the world, took the opportunity to plant a kiss on her lips. The incident took all of about 5 minutes, but it was a magical 5 minutes for this loving couple. No doubt, it was a time that will live in the memory banks of this couple until it is time for them to bid farewell to this life. Only man has the ability to smile and to make others smile with him, you know. Only man has the ability to believe in make-believe, in magic and magical powers, you know. But, at Christmas, make-believe becomes reality. The world seems to change and people want to smile and make others smile, also. Love becomes infectious. We do not smile sufficiently, it seems to me. For what reason do we only smile at Christmas? For what reason does Christmas come only once a year?

Let's make a bargain, all of us: Let us have Christmas, 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. What do you say?

Talk to you in 2010.

Chief Lady

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