

Sisters,

I must start by wishing each of you a very Blessed and Holy Christmas Season. I am truly thankful for each of you. Whether we know each other personally, only see each other on webinars, or have a real hard time working together, it doesn't matter, we are Sisters and I love each of you. Christmas season is a time of memories which are loving and fulfilling for some and less so for others.

When I was a child, it was about the toys I would get. I remember being so sad because I was born in a hospital with doctors and nurses while Jesus was born in a stable with only his Mom. There is no talk of even a midwife being present, only about 14-year girl with her husband, cows, sheep, and the Angels. Church Fathers teach us that Mary had no labor or birth pains. I want to believe that is true. Think of today's young teenage homeless mothers and what their Christmas must feel like.

As a teenager, Christmas was about going to Midnight Mass, getting the newest albums or a new radio, and the plans we made for the school vacation. Praying for snow so we could go sled riding in Prospect Park down dead man's hill or just hanging out without much to do. Carefree with no responsibility, without today's concerns like cyber bullying. Today there are many teenagers, just like when we were young, without a friend, feeling depressed, looking different, talking a different language. How are they spending their Christmas? Hopefully with a family, but still no friend to share the memories and new presents.

As a young adult, I enjoyed all the running around to parties, shopping to make sure I got the right present for everyone on my list. Spending more money than I had and not even worrying about the amount of overtime I would have to work to pay it all off. Seeing the faces of my nieces and nephews and even my Mom when they opened their present was all worth it. I really didn't care if I was too old for presents, that was fine.

When I was first a Mom, Christmas took a completely different turn. It was all about the children and making sure everything was perfectly correct, as if there is a book on what makes Christmas perfect. Our perfect Christmas was staying in

our pajamas until the in-laws came over for dessert. No running around. And yet, how many children had nothing.

As an older woman/mother, it is completely different. The children are out on their own, no grandchildren, no family close by; friends are the new family. I see my friends and cousins with their grandchildren and envy the life it breathes into them. I see some of my single friends and love the way they celebrate on their own. None of the things that were important before even matter now. It isn't about how I feel, it is about how we make others feel. Spreading the joy was always the true message of Christmas taught to me by my parents. Whether it be gifts or laughter, spread love and joy!! Adopt that family, answer the bell ringer.

We all celebrate Christmas in our own way. I ask that you remember the Sisters, friends, and family members without anyone to help them celebrate Christmas. Remember the disabled, the lonely, the poor, and the guy in the store who never smiled once in the ten years you have been going there to buy something.

While it is the season of Merry and Joy, it is the hardest season for many people.

Be the light in someone's life this Christmas.

Nollaig bheannaithe a bheith agat,

Karen