A Season for Dreams, Wishes, and Gift-Giving

Soon we will be celebrating the birthday of the Prince of Peace, but this "Prince" is not what we usually think of as a Prince. This "Prince" was born into a poor family living in an occupied land who became a refugee to save his life from a ruthless king. Nevertheless, he grew up to become an extraordinary teacher and preacher, healer and savior.

Today, many children across the globe experience much of what Jesus experienced as a child. When Rafif was 11 years old a couple of years ago, she wrote a letter of hope for UNICEF. Rafif is from Palestine, Jesus's homeland, and she, too, lives in an occupied land where her life is seriously endangered; yet, she, too, has the potential for greatness. She wrote in part:

> I hope to receive a strong education so that when I grow up, I can travel and study at a university and become an engineer. It is our right to live in safety, to play, to study, to travel without restrictions, and to build a beautiful future.
> I wish to return to my beautiful home.

We can only hope that Rafif is still alive and living her dream. Read her full letter and others at the UNICEF website, https://www.unicef.org/stories/dear-adults.

Child experts tell us all children long for love and acceptance, respect, encouragement, guidance, quality time together but also time to be themselves, honesty, consistency, reliability, and, of course, play time. Those who live in conflict zones or refugee camps especially want the opportunity to go to school, to enjoy the outdoors free of fear, and to be safe in their own homes with their own families.

So how do we adults celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace through the children in our lives? How do we satisfy their deepest needs and desires at the same time that we provide them with a little fun, something to unwrap under the tree? Here are some helpful hints as you do your Christmas shopping:

Look for toys that:

- Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, nonviolent interactions among children
- Foster cooperation and teamwork, like dolls and puzzles and some board games
- Involve constructing, like building blocks and molding clay
- Inspire creative arts, like craft supplies and musical instruments
- Promote movement, like bikes, wagons, and sports equipment
- Promote dramatic play, like costumes and props, puppets and magic sets
- Enhance the imagination, new ideas, and problem solving, like science and nature kits
- Respect the environment, that can be reused and recycled

And don't forget books, magazine subscriptions, Teddy Bears, and, YOU. There's nothing better than YOUR time!

Want more information? Visit these websites: www.paceebene.org/blog/2024/11/26/a-nonviolent-gift-guideand-why-it-matters (scan down to "Nonviolent gifts for kids abound") and www.greenamerica.org (search "Gifts for Children") for more ideas about gifts that promote the positive values we want for our children and have the extra benefit of being sweatshop-free and non-toxic.

May your holidays be blessed with Joy and Peace!
Merry Christmas!



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For more information about Pax Christi, visit www.paxchristinys.org or www.paxchristiusa.org.

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