

Gifts of Presence

Written by L.A. Plume
Wednesday, 25 November 2009 04:56

I'm one of those people who has almost all my Christmas shopping done before Thanksgiving.



I love Christmas, I love presents; these days I seem to be in the minority on that. What I'm hearing is:

"I hate giving gifts when they are expected."

"I think the holidays are too commercial."

"I'm not giving gifts this year."

"I just can't afford it."

Ok – I agree, somewhat. Holidays have become too commercial. Giving should come from the heart, not the calendar. But, then, there are expectations and the desire to give and receive, although not necessarily in that order. What can you do if you are caught off guard and someone gives you a present that you weren't expecting and you don't have one to give in return?

What about gifts of presence? If you simply aren't in the mood this year, how do you announce your non-intention, or do you pull that brick of fruitcake out of your freezer and put a cheery smile on your face? Think about it. If you can't, or don't want to spend the money, can you share your talent? We're all busy but there are always things some of us don't have the time, tools or aptitude to do. If you can, bake a cake or muffins, power-wash someone's terrace for them, host

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a small luncheon or dinner at their home for their friends where you take and serve the food, repair their broken something... the possibilities are endless if you are observant and thoughtful.

Or make an inexpensive gift – I'm partial to flavored salts myself, or flavored oils for bread dipping. These are easy to make, and you can produce several in one easy sitting. Buy a large container of sea salt, add dried herbs – even just basil is wonderful, or a mixture of basil, oregano and thyme. It is delicious on bread, vegetables, fried potatoes, etc. Do the same thing with oil – buy a container of cold-pressed olive oil, add some peppercorns, a sprig of thyme and/or rosemary, a clove of garlic, a pinch of dried sage, oregano, basil – whatever you have on hand. Put these items in individual bottles you've recycled from something else or found at the thrift or dollar store, let them sit for several days, tie a ribbon around the top and there you have it – a gift that can be enjoyed over a period of time. If you cook, make an extra dinner, pot of soup, or dessert that freezes well and wrap it up in a freezer friendly bag or container and let someone enjoy it on a night when they don't feel like cooking. Or, if you are so inclined, take a photograph of them, or their house, their pet, their view; put it in a frame, or print it on a few note cards.

If you can't manage or are feeling too bah-humbugy for any of the above, there is always the gift of time. Offer to walk with someone, or drive them to an appointment, shop with them, help them plant the garden, or sit and watch a movie; plop down on the couch and ask them to tell you their life story, or funniest story. In other words, be present. Sometimes just listening is the greatest gift we can give in this busy, noisy world of ours.