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LOCAL COMMENT

A mother's Christmas wish

By LYNNE COBB



DEAR SANTA:
I apologize that I haven't written to you in over three decades, unless taking dictation from my children for

their letters to you counts.
I'm turning to you because I

They are learning that possessions are more important than being a good friend. They aren't learning about the strength of love at an early age.

If they don't feel loved, then how will they treat their own children? Will they discipline with love, or will they discipline with hate? Will they know that a baby who doesn't want to eat may just not be hungry, or will they injure the child because it "wasn't listening"? Will they

I'm turning to you because I hope that you can grant me my Christmas wish. It's actually not for me, but it certainly will be like a gift for me, and for many others as well.

First, I want you to know that even though I'm pushing 40, I always have, and always will, believe in you. As I have explained to my older children, and will soon explain to my younger children, your life is based upon truth. As St. Nicholas, you are the patron saint to children. And, appropriately enough, your good works were performed on a magical, hope-filled night. For many people, Christmas is a magical season, filled with hope.

You'd be very proud of the people who spend their time making sure that all children have a wonderful Christmas. People of all races, religion and opinions seem to come together in December. This is a miracle in itself.

But you won't be proud of other adults in our society. Sad and horrific as it is, there are many adults who do not love, respect or nurture their own children, or the children of others. In fact, many of these parents beat, torture and even kill their own offspring. It really makes no sense to me, or a lot of other adults. And you really would be pained to read or watch reports of these barbaric acts, which have become a regular occurrence in our daily news.

You see, Santa, no one understands why this happens, and everyone is willing to blame someone else. "Maybe it is the fault of social workers who let children slip through the cracks," some say. "Maybe it is the fault of bystanders who don't report it," say others.

Personally, I believe that it is our own society that is at fault. So many people place the needs of their own children on the back burner because they are trying to find purpose in their lives. There seems to be a general feeling that caring and loving children is an inconvenience.

Somehow, these children who didn't ask to be brought forth into this world are suffering the consequences of a society who wants to leave them on their own, to raise themselves, to figure out right from wrong. These children don't know what to believe and what not to believe.

"wasn't listening"? Will they take the time to learn about their children's developmental stages, or will they punish their kids for being kids?

Will they understand that being a good parent takes a lot of time and sacrifice? That patience is a virtue? Will they be sickened hearing about child abuse, or will they become callous?

Santa, many adults talk about the government stepping in to take care of these children. At that point, it's too late. Outraged and upset citizens want laws enacted to protect the children, but will that work? If hospitals were to screen new mothers for prior child abuse before releasing them from the hospital with a new baby, the abusers would be giving birth somewhere else. Maximum allowable prison sentences haven't been a deterrent yet. I don't think court ordered sterilization, mandatory birth control or any other politically motivated laws are the solution, either.

With that in mind, Santa, could you please help? First, it would be great if the Christmas spirit we feel in December could last all year. That we would help others, not because it's a holiday, but because we want to.

Most of all, Santa, please bring to us, as a society, the reverence of children again. That childhood would be a happy time for children. That parents would spend time with their children; real time, like reading or cuddling, or making meals together. That children will once again be looked upon as a blessing, not as an 18-year sentence.

Please bring to us a knowledge of parenting, and when we struggle, give us the foresight to seek help, via a network of loving friends and relatives, or by taking a parenting class.

And please, Santa, don't give up on us yet. For some children, you are the only thing in this world that they believe in. For some adults, you are their main motivator during this season. In this season for children, grant us the gifts that we are lacking to care for the recipients of the gift of life — the children.

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