

WHAT SHALL I BRING HIM?

My six-year-old grandson, Sam, tells me he's going to be "Frankenstein" in his church's annual Christmas pageant. Though he's still a little confused, I think he's beginning to realize that his role will be that of a wise man bringing frankincense to the baby Jesus.

Children's Christmas pageants are wonderful, full of innocence and awe, at acting out the familiar story that changed everything—even though they may not know that. They love the costumes, the songs, the farm animals and the chance to perform before the adults. But even they must realize that this story is not like other plays that are put on once and soon forgotten. This one gets repeated year after year.

Many of the children have had a younger sibling and people have brought presents for the new baby, but most of them were boring—clothing, rattles, stuffed animals. Baby Jesus gets gold, frankincense, and myrrh—presents fit for a king.

As we celebrate Epiphany this year, what are we bringing him?

As a parish, St. Leo's is bringing its commitment to live out its mission statement of being a Eucharistic community glorifying God with lives of presence and service through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. We may often fail in this attempt, but our desire is also a gift that delights God.

We also bring our desire to more fully become a diverse community of Germans, Italians, African Americans, Hispanics, Burundians, and Congolese. We want to know and appreciate each other's cultures better and truly become brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers as we come to worship and be fed at one Eucharistic table.

We bring our ongoing collaboration with our partner parishes as we work together in ministries. We also mark the event with our annual evening prayer and international pot luck dinner as we remember in prayer and fellowship that Jesus came for all peoples. We continue to cooperate with and learn from others, including community leaders, the police, and other churches, who are making a positive impact on our neighborhoods.

We want to give God our best. For each of us as individuals, our best can be as unique as we are. There are many favorite Christmas stories of people who searched far and wide for the perfect gift to give the baby king and often discovered that the best gift was right in front of them. Like the "littlest angel" who shared her box of childhood treasures or the "little drummer boy" who played his drum for him, we find that the best gift of all is often simple—no bows or wrapping paper. The best gift of all is ourselves—just as we are.

It's just what King Jesus wants.

-Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

