

DIVISION SUPERINTENDENTS ON U.S. LEAVE

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A CHRISTMAS GIFT

ONE DAY a little boy taught me the true meaning of Christmas. He was in the special class for sick children. Like his mates, he was delicate and needed all the help, spiritual and physical, that his teacher could give him. He clung to her with a deep and abiding affection.

Christmas was coming. The children gathered in little groups whispering about the gifts they were going to bring the teacher. Each child had something laid aside for the great occasion, something very precious. All but little Paul. He had nothing to offer.

As Christmas Day came nearer, little Paul's big eyes grew sorrowful. Again and again he went over the list of his possessions, hoping that one might do. The china elephant? No, his trunk was broken. His dog? His beloved dog? No. The teacher would never take him. There was nothing, nothing in the world that he could give — he who loved her most.

At last the day came. The children clamored about the teacher, each claiming her attention for his gift and for himself. Each of them happy in the teacher's smile, rejoicing in her thanks. All but the one sitting in the corner hidden from sight. The teacher missed him and tried to draw him into the group.

"No, no, I want to be left alone," he said, and hid his face on his arms. The teacher took the children to the Christmas play and leaving them there hurried back to the little boy who seemed so unhappy.

To her surprise and delight he met her at the door, his face glowing, his eyes alight with joy.

"I was feeling unhappy because I could find nothing to give you for Christmas. But I found it. It is a prayer. I have asked God to tell you how much I love you, and to please take care of you and keep you happy every day you live. Amen. Do you like that?"

"Dear little Paul, that is the loveliest gift that ever I could have. You have made me very very happy."

So little Paul found the truth about Christmas. And I am passing it along to you this happy Christmas season. That is my prayer for you and for those who love you.

— ANGELO PATRI