



## **ADVENT: A TALE OF THREE LISTS**

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“We think that people are grateful because they are happy. But is this true? Look closely and you will find that people are happy because they are grateful.”

David Steindl-Rast

### **THE LIST WE ALL EXPECT**

We all expect to see a list of wished for Christmas gifts, especially from our youngest children. But let's be honest - we all make a list, hoping others will ask for it! It often finds its home on the refrigerator, perhaps fastened with a cute, seasonal magnet.

How can we move from incipient greed to more profoundly grateful hearts? How might we braid generosity into the lives and language of all of the generations? I am going to suggest adding two more lists. We can build them as families, colleagues, or groups of friends. Here are my nominees for the two lists that will flank the Christmas wish lists:

### **GRATITUDE**

Make this a list of all the things you brainstorm as a group. For what are you truly grateful? Family. Loving relationships. Warm home. Enough food. Health. Access to medical care. Schools. Work. Time with those you love. Toys. Grown up “toys,” like cars and recreational equipment. Keep digging. I'm grateful for dirty clothes, proof positive that people at my house are healthy enough to get clothes dirty! How about a growing grocery bill, proof positive that children are growing, along with their voracious appetites. Look around your home - what are the signs of life that give you reasons to give thanks in all seasons?

### **GIVE AWAY**

A Native American tribe counts wealth by what they have to give away. I love that. What does your family, your group of friends, your congregation, your workplace have that they can give or share with others? Do you have toys and clothing in excellent condition that people you live with have outgrown? Do you have dishes or pots and pans, languishing in the attic or basement, that are not used? Do you have books you've read? How about beds or furniture? Check those closets, where stockpiled items moulder and take up space. Who might get some use and pleasure out of

them. But how about spending time - a visit, a letter, children's pictures, or listening to Christmas carols together - with a person who misses you or doesn't have many regular contacts in his or her life? We all have so much with which we can be generous. Discover that Jesus was right when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If we don't teach this, in words and actions, to the children and youth in our lives, who will?

What a terrific season to help all of us remember God's greatest gift to all of us in Jesus, but expressing our thanks each and every day and sharing the bounty that God has entrusted to us. Enjoy creating and living these two additional lists, now and in the year ahead!