

# ***REFLECTIONS***

December 16, 2007

**Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.**

*Matthew 2:11*

## **The Gift**

There will likely not be another gift quite like it. A call had come from the church receptionist saying, “Santa came early this year and he left a gift here for you and Janice.” In our wildest dreams we would not have guessed who Santa was.

Phil is a homeless man who came into our lives one Sunday morning from the church pew behind ours. His looks fit the image of Santa Claus and the note he wrote us at the end of the service revealed his intellect. He would later express regret that the opportunity for his life to matter may have slipped away. We wanted to help him discover significance in his life; but then Phil stopped coming to church. We assumed that he had taken the trip to Mexico he had frequently mentioned. Then the gift came.

We were so moved by it. We pondered what was hidden beneath the wrapping, and we were equally curious about the contents of the envelope bound around it. Intrigue or not, I wanted to savor the gift rather than open it. Finally we did. The note with it read in part:

*“In a matter of hours I will be leaving for my beloved city of Morelia in Mexico where I again will be Santa Claus at a big store there. For the past month I have been gathering stuffed animals to give to the kids; my two big duffle bags are themselves stuffed with upwards of eighty ‘animales relenos’... for beautiful children whose graciousness, courtesy, and smiles are beyond description.”*

Phil is a man from the street. He harbored regrets about his life’s significance; but it seems significant to me. His intention is clear and his heart is pure. His mission is to make the lives of a few children a little better. And when he opens his two big duffle bags of stuffed animals, those children will feel the love of Jesus Christ through a man with little else to give. Oh, if more of us would live the spirit of Christmas as well as he.

His plans are to return one day. When he does, Phil likely will still be without a home; and he still may harbor regret for opportunities passed by. But one thing is sure. Phil understands the gift of love—the gift God gave to the world that first Christmas Day.

And the gift Phil left for us—well the container of Ghirardelli Hot Cocoa mix sits among other gifts—none given with more warmth; none received with more gratitude.

*“You are the light of the world,”*

*Richard* +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at [richard@reflectingthesavior.org](mailto:richard@reflectingthesavior.org).