

WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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Letters, Prayers and Hope

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It has been often repeated that the children will lead us, echoing the ancient prophet Isaiah's vision of the peaceable realm of God. "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." (Isaiah 11:6) We rejoice in moments of children cutting through all our adult-made confusion and stating the most simple, startling and honest truths, putting us big people in our rightful places.

In a recent article published in Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* (12/11/11), letters to Santa written by children reveal what is most important to them and ought to be to us. "Dear Santa, What I want for Christmas is for my family to have a house. My parents are backed up on rent and we might not have a Christmas." Or another plea: "This year I want an Xbox and an iPod Touch. But most of all, I want my mom and dad to stop fighting and get along for once."

These are poignant glimpses into American homes, letters to Santa that read like prayers to God. They are also signs of hope because one indication that hope is lost is when we cannot even speak the truths of our lives. Even when that truth is painful, to say it out loud – to Santa, to God, to a friend – is to have hope that the situation can be changed. Wolves and lambs rarely bunk

together but what a powerful image of reconciliation we are offered here.

Most of us are thoroughly disgusted with a stalemated Congress where lines in the sand seem to be lines drawn in concrete – unmovable, non-negotiable, and uncross-able. Calves on one side; lions on the other. Leopards over here; kids (young goats) over there. The tender hopes of our nation’s children are not even a distant whisper in the polished, marbled halls of our elected officials.

We need another “Miracle on 34th Street” moment. Remember when letters to Santa were delivered by the ton to the court room where Kris Kringle was on trial in this classic Christmas movie? We need those letters delivered to our representatives and senators in Congress and in state capitals. Let them hear a roar from our children who are brave enough to give hope to our own deepest dreams.

“Dear Santa, You don’t have to bring me any little toys or any clothes. Just please bring me happiness.” Happiness. Rent money. Peace in the home. A job for their parents. A place to live. These are what children want. Let them lead us into the New Year with their hopes – hopes made more real because we, the adults, are actually listening. Let us make a resolution to make their priorities our priorities. When our children are safe, and fed, and housed, and clothed, and educated, and healthy, so will our society be more like that peaceable kingdom.

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