

The Gifts of the Magi & What We Can Offer Christ This Christmas

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Hello, friends, it's so wonderful to be with you this Advent season. My name is Kate Capato, I'm a Sacred Art painter, dancer, and speaker based in the Philadelphia area, and today, we're going to dive in to what we can give Christ this Christmas and throughout the year. I ask that you join me in prayer before we begin.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Amen. Come, Holy Spirit, Lord. We invite You into this time. Though we may be virtual, we know that Your grace covers us, no matter where we are. Lord, and I ask that You bless all those that receive this message, Lord, I ask that You bless my words, anything that You want each of us to receive, Lord, we just ask for the receptivity, the openness. Lord, anything that is on our heart that may be a burden, we place at the foot of the cross right now in Jesus's name, and we ask that You take care of it. We surrender it to You. We praise Your name, and we thank You for the gift that you are, and we ask that Our Lady wrap us in her mantle as we pray.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In name of the Father, the Son, Holy Spirit, Amen.

God Speaks to Us

So, friends, years ago when I was studying in Florence, Italy, Sacred Art, I was going through some rough times. I was living in Italy, in Florence, and it was a time where God was teaching me a lot spiritually. Maybe you can relate, and in a sense, there was a darkness in my heart, even though things that were going on around me they were very joyful, there was something that the Lord wanted to teach me throughout my travels in Italy, and little ways that God was speaking to me, because He speaks to us so regularly. I don't know if you recognize it, but He has a particular way to speak to each of us, sometimes through symbols, sometimes through artwork, sometimes through actual words of others, or something that we hear upon our heart, through Scripture, through the Mass. These are all the ways that God speaks to us, and during this time.

The Symbolism of Myrrh

I was living in an apartment in Florence, Italy. The street names, the artwork that I kept seeing, all of it was focused around the Magi, and particularly the one who gave myrrh. And my spiritual spidey-sense, if you will, went up, and I recognized, "Okay, I wonder if God is speaking to me." So I brought it to prayer, I said, "Lord, is there something about the Wise Men, "particularly this

one who gave myrrh, "that You want me to learn from, and what is that?" So as I dove into prayer, I recognized that God was asking me to learn about myrrh, and I learned some symbology behind myrrh, that myrrh is symbolic of suffering, in its raw form, it actually has thorns, now, they take it from the tree, and they create a gum from it, and they use it for medicinal purposes, particularly anointing and burials, and it was given to Christ kind of foreshadowing His death and His burial and all that. It can be used in incense, but this concept of symbolism regarding suffering really struck me during that time.

And I came across a book, that there, it's filled with apparitions from Our Lady, and there's a place in there where Our Lady articulates the symbolism behind the gifts from the Wise Men. And she continues this message that I kept receiving and states that myrrh was a symbol of the suffering that we experience. And that is what that Wise Man was gifting to Christ. And I thought to myself, "Wow, that's very interesting", because we've known about these gifts, but did we know the symbolic significance behind them and how it has to do with us?

So as I chewed on that in prayer, I recognized that God was asking me to take this dark time, these challenges that I was growing through, some of them are minor, right? We have daily sufferings, annoyances, you know, duties that maybe aren't our favorite thing to do, that can be still considered a suffering, and then of course we have larger ones, deep, deep suffering, sorrows, our wounds from the past that maybe come up. And all of this is under the umbrella of suffering. And in studying this Wise Man and praying with it, I was realizing the Holy Spirit was asking me to gift those sufferings to Christ. And it sounds kind of crazy, and maybe it sounds silly, you know, because is that a gift? But as I was praying, I recognized that it truly is, because when we share in each other's sufferings, and we give, we allow, we allow someone to enter into it, we become more intimate. We know that person better and they know us better. And it goes both ways.

So in the offering that we're to give Christ, our suffering, because really we don't really have much else that is ours if we're going to be honest with who we are as humans and our frailty and our weaknesses, but this is what we're able to give, and when we give that, we enter into a deeper communion with the Lord. And He asked that we share in His suffering as well. And all of this was coming to me in prayer, and it was just so powerful as I like gazed upon this artwork in Italy, as I was reading the Scriptures, and it just continued to unfold throughout the years that I was there. And I felt very called to paint an image based on this, to articulate this concept of sharing in each other's suffering, and that being the true gift, because it brings intimacy, it brings communion.

The One Who Gave Myrrh

So over here you can see actually the work that I created, it's titled The One Who Gave Myrrh, and we have the Wise Man holding the infant child. And in the infant child's hand is myrrh in its raw form with the thorns. We have the star right here to show how the Wise Men came, and found Christ through the star, but if you look closely, the biggest aspect of this work is the embrace that they're exchanging. Now of course I took artistic liberty, because I don't know

factually if any of them held Christ, but spiritually speaking, I know that there was a sense of receptivity, a sense of entering into one another that did take place. And this articulation of myrrh and suffering, and the exchange that happens is what I felt called to portray in this image.

And it's something that I invite each one of you and myself into more fully that intimate exchange. It also reminds me of another time, because this message, when the Lord speaks to us, it continues, you know, He shares one part of it in our life that's very important. And then maybe a few years later it comes up again, because it's a continual unfolding, something that we must continually learn deeper and deeper.

With You through Suffering

And so at the beginning of the pandemic, another challenge, I mean, we all have faced these things. So especially during that time, I'm sure you went through something, as well. And the beginning of the pandemic, really, I felt the weight of what was happening, the fear, the confusion along with personal things that were going on in my family, and I remember just praying to the Lord and asking, "Lord can you just change this, change that, "fix this, fix that", and I got an image in prayer, and I saw myself under this rubble, just covered in rubble and brokenness, and I felt it. It was just heavy.

And then I saw, in this image, I saw the Lord Jesus standing beside this pile of rubble and me underneath it. And I expected Him to, you know, grab my hand, and pull me out of that rubble, maybe to kick off the rubble or even maybe even just piece by piece remove it, but I actually didn't see Him do that. What I saw Him do is come under the rubble with me, sit there and embrace me in it, and it made me weep in that moment, it made me feel seen, it made me feel cherished, it made me feel known, and it gave me strength.

You see, when we truly love another, we walk with them in the good and the challenging. And Christ was doing that with me, and He wants to do that with you as well. But the thing is, He aches for us to do that with Him. So we can imagine Him on the cross, we can imagine Him on the way to Calvary, we can imagine Him being whipped, all these little moments in the garden, even some of the secret moments of His life where He did suffer even before the passion and death. And we can imagine ourselves in prayer we can ask Him to help us enter into those moments, and to be with Him in that suffering.

So it's a give and take, because we are so blessed to have a God that is not just this high almighty, you know, giving us commands, but someone who wants to be so involved with every aspect of our life, but He wants us to be involved with every aspect of His life. How powerful is that? How, like what a gift, He comes down as this little babe, so, so humble, so innocent, and He wants to be a part of our journey, but He also wants us to be a part of His journey. True communion, true intertwining of souls.

A Perfect Gift for Christmas

So the best thing that we can give Christ this Christmas is our yes and our offering of whatever is happening in our life, but also a receptivity of any suffering that He has gone through. And I challenge you and invite you into this, this prayer, this openness to an exchange of suffering. And it can seem scary at first, but as I mentioned in that encounter with Christ, in that rubble, there was a strength that ... I'm getting emotional thinking about it now, but there was a strength that came upon me, because of that intimate exchange. And maybe you can think of a moment where a friend, a spouse, a parent, a brother, a sister did that for you.

Maybe you can think of someone who truly loved you in a hard time, and how maybe they didn't fix everything that you were going through, in one way, but them just being with you gave you a strength to continue through it and come out of it. So think of those moments, and recognize how Christ wants to do that fully with us, and He will love for us to do that with Him. And of course, we are not His savior, so it'll have a different weight to it, but He wants us, He aches for us, and He humbles Himself to receive from us as well. Just like this Wise Man holding the infant Christ. The humility of God to come as a little babe. It speaks so profoundly to what He's inviting us into.

An Invitation of Intimacy

So as we enter into Advent, as we pray upon the nativity, you know, it's a season where everyone's asking us to, you know, society is, "Buy this, buy that." "Give this to this person, give this to that person", may we stay focused, and recognize this is an invitation to become even more intimate with the Lord, to embrace Him and allow Him to embrace us, and may we not miss this opportunity. But may we maybe go to adoration and pray with this. Maybe go to daily mass or even just a few extra minutes at home before you begin your day, and as you end your day, entering in to this invitation of intimacy, an exchange of suffering, and saying to Christ, "Here is all of my burdens. I'm not going to hide them from you. And may I share in what you suffered as well, Lord, "may I kiss your wounds?"

You know, St. Veronica is a beautiful symbol of that as well where she wiped the Christ's face, the face of our Lord during His agony. And what does He do in exchange? He gives her a gift. His beautiful face imprinted upon that cloth. The thing is, when we share in His sufferings, He always gives us a gift in return. And this is not the reason we do it, we do it because we love Christ, but God is never outdone in generosity.

So He wants to bestow upon you so many wonderful gifts, He wants to anoint you this season. And I challenge you to say yes to it, to believe in His goodness, and just to become more intimate with the Christ, your lover, our lover, our best friend, our Father, all the things that He represents for us and truly is, you know, allow ourselves, let's allow ourselves to go there go deeper with Him today and through this Christmas and throughout the year because this, you know, it's not just one season, but it's a continuation, a continual journey to know someone better, and better and better, which includes, again, the highs and the lows.

Closing Prayer

So, Lord, we just close in a prayer and we say, Lord, thank You for the invitation. We ask that You give us the grace to respond to that invitation. Lord, we desire to be more intimate with You. We desire to share our sufferings with You, but also to kiss Your wounds Lord, to embrace You in Your sufferings. Lord, give us the grace to do that. Lord, maybe that is through a friend who is suffering, and we recognize You in them, so we're going to be with them, and in that we're also being with You, but maybe that's also just through prayer time, and contemplating the passion, and all that You went through, and imagining ourselves there, embracing You, comforting You.

We ask Our Lady to help us to do that, because she is an icon of that compassion, but we also allow her to do that to us, because she did that to you, Lord, as we know this is an exchange of love and intimacy. And we praise you, and we ask all the saints to intercede on our behalf that we may become so rooted in love and cherishing a relationship with you. All glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Thank you so much for joining today, I hope that you received from the Holy Spirit, take what we shared and enter into prayer, and see where the Lord continues to unfold this message for you. God bless.