

A couple of years ago a friend of mine, who at that time happened to be an inmate in Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge was telling me about a visit with his wife and children. It was a Saturday, and the children were excited to see their dad. The youngest, his son, age 6 was especially animated and couldn't wait to tell his dad all that had happened since they had visited last. "My friend Billy, and his dad and me we went to the lake, and we went fishing," said the young man while looking his dad straight in the eye, "and I caught a fish this big, and me and Billy we saw a turtle, and we almost caught him too." He said rushing on without taking a breath, "And me and Billy and his dad played baseball, and I hit a high one that he couldn't even catch." But then he suddenly stopped. He looked off in the distance and seemed to come to a different understanding of what he just said, and as he did he turned back to his dad and said, "When are you going to be good so you can take me and Billy fishing?"

It was right then the light came on for my inmate friend, and he told me he finally realized what he had been doing to his children. It was the comment from his son that compelled him to turn his life around.

It is the gift of the children to speak so clearly to us on so difficult an issue. Through the years my friend has had many others offer helpful advice and direction. But his ego prevented him from accepting it. His efforts preserved his ego, but nearly lost him a son and family.

Children have much to teach us. They teach us what is really important in life. My two grandsons jumped for joy earlier this year when they woke up to a snow covered yard. They have mastered the art of the running and jumping full body hug when they first see us. Their eyes light up the room when they discover we are in the audience at their Christmas Program.

Christmas is for the children, they say. Maybe that is because the children have a much better understanding of what Christmas is all about. When life, and the season overwhelm us let us remember to stop and watch the children. They will teach us what we need to know if we will let them. *Afterall, Christmas is for the children.* The Christ Child is the reason. Perhaps if we listen closely to the children, and try to see the world through their eyes we will rediscover the excitement and the joy of Christmas.

I pray that your Christmas season be a time of great joy in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that you and your families are blessed in the New Year.

*The Montana Catholic Conference is preparing for the legislative session starting on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. They are offering to provide all who are interested a weekly update on the session, and alerts to important issues you may want to be involved with. If you are interested in joining the alert network please sign up at [alertnetwork@bresnan.net](mailto:alertnetwork@bresnan.net), or by logging on to the MCC Website at [www.montanacatholic.org](http://www.montanacatholic.org)*