

on the MOVE

Story by
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Photo illustration by
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'Tis the season to be buying



As the number of shopping days until Christmas rapidly dwindles, time constraints, budgets and crowds are among the common challenges that diocesan teens face.

But this year, Timothy Flynn avoided the rush — even though he lost a precious morning of sleep as a result.

In the past, Timothy preferred doing his Christmas shopping about the same time Santa's reindeer are preparing for liftoff.

"But my mom didn't like it," said Timothy, 15, a parishioner at St. Cecilia's Church in Irondequoit.

Timothy was in for a rude awakening — literally — this time around. His mother rustled him out of bed the morning after Thanksgiving, so they could arrive at Irondequoit Mall by 6:30 a.m.

"I had thought I would just have the day off. I was pretty groggy, but I got some good deals," Timothy said.

Timothy also avoided the onslaught of customers — somewhat. Amazingly, he said, stores that were open when he arrived at the mall were already doing a brisk business. By the time he left, around noon, there were no parking spots remaining.

"It was really packed," he said.

Meanwhile, Christina Essom said she buys her Christmas gifts early because she worries about her cash disappearing quickly, rather than parking spots or store items.

"If I hold onto money too long, I spend it (on myself)," explained Christina, 17, from St. Jerome's Church in East Rochester.

Daria Alongi is more accustomed to shopping madness on Dec. 24, when she joins other procrastinators who rush to get inside stores before the doors are locked.

"I go with my dad every Christmas Eve. Oh, it's crazy," remarked Daria, 16, from St. Louis Church in Pittsford.

Yet Megan Brown has approximately 20 family members and friends to buy for — so she prefers to complete her shopping by mid-December in order to avoid the pressure of those final days.

"I don't like to wait, because I get stressed out when I can't find anything," said Megan, 15, from St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville.

One item that's already rapidly disappearing is the Furby doll. The Gremmlin-like creature has sparked shopping mania this Christmas season in the grand tradition of Beanie Babies and Cabbage Patch Dolls.

Daria recalls a similar desperate search when her family attempted to locate Power Ranger toys for her brother a few years ago.

"We'd go out of our way, and couldn't find them anywhere," she said.

When told that customers in other cities have reportedly gotten in fist fights over Furby dolls, Daria exclaimed, "That's ridiculous. That's not what Christmas is about."

Gift-giving, Daria stated, "should be about giving and receiving graciously. Not 'I

want, I want, I want."

Searching for alternatives? Personalized gifts, Christina pointed out, can be much more meaningful than glitzy, expensive items from stores. For instance, she enjoys giving her grandfather her own home-baked mincemeat pies for Christmas.

"He said he appreciated that more than a new car or gold watch," Christina said. "If it's from my heart, it's the best present I could give to somebody — whether it cost \$2 or \$200."

Because of her belief in giving from the heart, Christina said she doesn't give cash or gift certificates for Christmas unless they've been requested.

"Oh, I hate that — it's so impersonal. It's like saying, 'Here, I don't know who you are,'" Christina commented.

¿Que 'Ho, ho, ho'?

You may have once believed — or may still believe — that Santa Claus brings gifts to children worldwide on Christmas Eve.

But if you ran this story by children in other countries, their reaction might well be "Santa who?"

According to the World Book Encyclopedia, Santa Claus is acknowledged primarily in the United States, Canada and Australia. Although the legend of a Santa-like figure exists in many other lands, that person has many other identities.

The practice of holiday gift-giving, the encyclopedia said, probably began in ancient Rome and northern Europe. By the year 1100, St. Nicholas — a fourth-century bishop — was identified with gift-giving in many European countries. Legend has it that St. Nicholas brought presents on the eve of his feast day, Dec. 6.

In the U.S., Santa Claus became the accepted bearer of Christmas gifts in the 1800s and the day of his "arrival" was changed to Christmas Eve.

The St. Nicholas legend is still observed in the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and parts of Germany. However, that person is known as "Father Christmas" in the British Isles, "Pere Noel" in France and "Weihnachtsmann" in Germany.

Meanwhile, Italy's equivalent of Santa Claus is "La Befana," a kindly witch. In Sweden, children look forward to gifts from "Jultomten," an elf. He is known as "Julenissen" in Denmark and Norway.

In Spanish nations, wise men are said to bring gifts on the eve of the Epiphany, Jan. 6. That date signifies the end of the 12 days of Christmas.

And in northern Germany, beware! St. Nicholas' assistant, "Knecht Rupert" (Servant Rupert) brings presents to the homes of good kids — and whipping rods to parents of bad kids.

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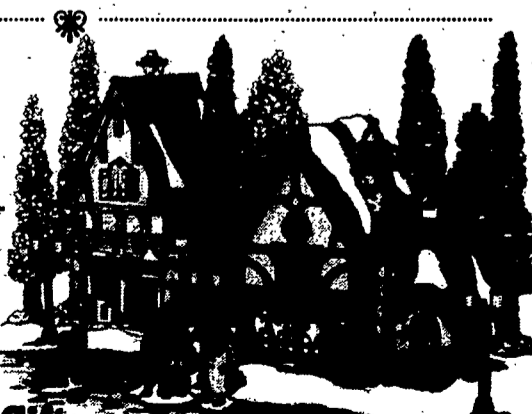
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