



THE LIONS' HEART

Dear LACS Families,

Well it seems the Christmas season is upon us! There is always something special about this time of year. Regardless of the commercialism this time of year, a spirit of joy and sharing always seems to prevail during the Christmas season.

While reflecting on my childhood memories of the Christmas season, I realize it is the sensory experiences I hold most dear such as the taste of traditional food; the smell of spices found in cookies, pies, and sweet treats; the sight of beautiful lights, candles, cards, and longed for gifts to give and receive; the sound of happy voices, bells, and crackling fires. And the special feeling of being close to loved ones and appreciating family traditions. One of those traditions was the wonderful music which transports us to the humble manger or the night sky of Bethlehem. One beautiful hymn, "O Come All Ye Faithful" beckons us to come adore the baby, Christ the Lord.

While I certainly received plenty of gifts over the years, my fondest memories are time spent with family. My siblings and I still reflect on those childhood memories of the Christmas season with great joy. It is these memories that I hold so dear and so I have carried over traditions to my own family. Our children bring us special joy during this season. As we watch them take in all of the Christmas spirit, they remind us of the magic found in simple gifts, loved ones, and time together with family and friends. As the year draws to an end and many of us grown-ups look forward to time off, I encourage you to make time with your children the most important gift you give your child and yourself. Make the sensory experiences those that matter. Take time to taste, smell, see, listen and feel the Christmas spirit with your children. Show them how to really appreciate the little joys found all around at this time of year. Begin to build the memories that they will hold dear for a lifetime. I challenge you to follow your children and experience the Christmas season as they do by hearing the joy in their laughter, seeing the love in their eyes, feeling the hope in their touch, and seeing as your child sees the joy, hope, wonder, and love. See your child as the ultimate gift from God to you. Cherish them always and hold them dear.

I wish you and your children a safe and wonderful Christmas season. May you continue to experience the world through your child's eyes.

Finally, recommendations for reading during the Christmas break for your child. One of the things kids look forward to in December is the academic downtime, but there is no reason they can't keep their minds sharp during the Christmas holiday. And they can have fun while doing it. Reading can be done in short 10 minute increments. "Reading doesn't have to mean sitting at a table with a school book for a long amount of time each day" says Kathy Doyle Thomas, Executive Vice President of the bookstore chain, Half Price Books. "You can easily 'sneak' reading into daily activities." Here are her tips for sneaking learning into holidays at home:

- Have your children read holiday cards when they are received in the mail, and let them write a message in outgoing cards.
- Let children read ingredients from holiday recipes while you bake together. It's a great way for them to learn measurements and temperatures.
- Set aside time for kids to "show off" their new reading skills to visiting relatives. Children love being the focus of attention, and grandparents are usually more than willing to see their progress.
- Make special holiday readings a tradition. Find a special book for Christmas, and have each member of the family read from it at the same time each year.
- Even if no books make your child's wish list, make sure you give at least one as a gift, and encourage them to read it.
- Find books that focus on an interest your child has. For example if they ask for a bike, find a book that includes a bicycle adventure. There are books out there to suit every interest under the sun – it just takes a little browsing.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Regards,

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