

16 December 2009

Dear St. Clement Families and Staff,

People often ask me where the gifts go that the children bring to the Advent Mass. Let me tell you where two of them went:

Ten year old Susie* ran to the door to greet me. Her 12 year old brother David* was just a heartbeat behind her. They invited my partner Melanie and I to come in to their small apartment. There was a couch, two chairs and a cabinet with a 12 inch T.V. There was also a small dining table with chairs. We did not see any toys or books. There were not even pictures to hang on the walls. David stood beside his mother's chair. Susie sat on the arm. David said, "We will have to translate for our mother."

I gave them a food voucher worth \$50 at No Frills. The mother and children were excited. "We'll have a good dinner now!" David translated. Susie bounced up and down.

Then I gave Susie and David their gifts. "Alright!" shouted David. Susie took the gift without a word. She closed her eyes and hugged it to her chest. Later, David and Susie laid their gifts tenderly on the kitchen table (there was no Christmas tree). They would save the gifts to open at the appropriate time.

Thank you Kim McBride for organizing this very awesome gift drive, and thanks to all of you who brought gifts for children to enjoy at Christmas. Through St. Clement School's charitable initiatives you give joy to many children, here and around the world. May God bless you all.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Franko
President, St. Clement Conference
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

*These are not their real names to protect their anonymity.