

John Howard Griffin

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Christmas eve

Beloved Nell,

It is 10:30 p.m. and I hear Susan in the next room trying to awaken the boys to get them ready to go for midnight Mass. A quiet time now at an end. We were busy all day, and then had early supper so the children to sleep before midnight Mass. I went in and lay down to read Stanislas Fumet's new book on Leon Bloy (which just came from Plon yesterday) and fell to sleep too. I got up at 9:30, took strong coffee and got myself shaved and ready before the general "awakening." After Mass, we will come back and ~~hope~~ open some of the presents, and the first one's will be yours. I am most anxious to see what the books are, but we never open until this time, so I could not write and tell you about them yet. We did get Mandy's music "ball" open, and then rewrapped it, so she will have a festival tonight, for she loves that and her books better than anything.

Piedy and I did all the cooking yesterday - made everything from scratch, even the butter, the breads, the fruit-cakes, etc. I was up "clarifying" the butter at 4:30 this morning and finally got to bed around five.

In all of this, we are immensely aware of the rest of the world's misery tonight, the poverty, the suffering in jails, in hospitals. We spent most of our "present" money this year in Vietnam and India, feeding the children; and even the children feel very good about it, and do not regret even slightly that the stack of presents under the tree is a bit smaller than in years past. We got them (and Piedy made much of it) mostly clothes and books. The thought that we can feed a child for a month for two dollars, just haunted us too much this Christmas; and in everything they wanted, we asked the children if they would rather have that or see that five dollars feed two children. But we didn't deprive them. We just didn't get them anything too foolish or extravagant.

Now, I must get ready for Mass. The boys and Susan will be spiked out in new clothes, and so will Mandy, so they are bathing excitedly now. At Christmas, all our friends are with us in spirit in this house, as I know we are there with you in your house.

Our best love to you there, and to you here.

John