

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 22, 1950

An Old Christmas Card

It is the Christmas season and the year is 1950. Nearly two thousand years ago with peaceful wings unfurled, angels bent down to earth where the quiet sheep and the marveling shepherds watched.

It is the Christmas season and there is no peace except the peace which is in our hearts as we gather around the beloved Christmas tree.

Let us make this the most beautiful Christmas America has ever known. Not blindly forgetting, but as a pledge to our children that there will be peace again some day, a peace for which the men and women and children today are dying.

Christmas came to us across the ocean. It is packed full of old memories from many lands, as we wrote yesterday. But Christmas, like people in America, has gone into the melting pot. It is our own. Where else would you see fireworks on Christmas Day except in the South? Where else except in California would you hang wreaths of wild cherry in your window and your front door?

Grim reality comes early to children now. But you can offset the cruelty and tragedy by making this Christmas shine like the holy star which led three kings to Bethlehem long ago. To the alien children who share the warmth of our fireside, you can offer toys and faith, gaiety and beauty. Put away heavy heartedness for this day. Look deep into your heart to rediscover the eternal verities which are challenged. Read again the story of what happened in a stable in other troubled times.

Christmas has always been for children. They are still innocent and trusting. Make them happy. It takes so little. Teddy bears and pop corn, wreaths and garlands and trees, winking candles and the sound of carols. A house where, without cynicism or doubt of the ultimate dignity of man, of the individual, the Child of Bethlehem is still deeply loved.

Over the snowy hills and valleys of America, in the clear air be borne the brave old melody. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

One of the most charming, thought-provoking Christmas cards yet received is an artistic hand lettered reproduction of a letter written as a Christmas gift by

Fra Giovanni on Christmas eve, Anna Domini, (in the year of Our Lord or of the Christian era, abbreviated A.D.) M O L III, from Pontassieve. To the Most Illustrious, The Countessa Allagia delgi Aldobrandeschi on the Viade artelli Rirenze.

The letter follows. Most Noble Contessina. I salute you. The rascal who carries this letter, if he devour them not on the way, will crave your acceptance of some of the fruits of our garden. Would that the peace of heaven reach you through such things of the earth.

Contessina, forgive an old friend his babble, but my love for you goes deep. There is nothing I can give you which you have not got; but there is much, very much, that, while I cannot give it, you can take. No Heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take Heaven! No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instance. Take Peace.

The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy. There is radiance and glory in the darkness, could we but see and to see, we have only to look. Contessina, I beseech you to look!

Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love, by which wisdom with power. Welcome it, grasp it and you touch the Angel's hand that brings it to you. Everything we call a trial a sorrow or a duty believe me, that Angel's hand is there, the gift is there and the wonder of an over-shadowing presence. Our joys, too. Be not content with them as joy. They too conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering that you will find each but cloaks your heaven. Courage, then, to claim it that is all! But courage you have, and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending,, through unknown country, home.

And so at this Christmas time, I greet you not quite as the world sends you greetings, but with profound esteem, and with the prayer of you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

I have the honor to be your servant, though the least worthy of them

Fra Giovanni