

We heard about a 6 yr old who offered her cousin, whom she adored, her most precious possession. It was an old cracked plastic mug. She had used that mug for years- for filling up with water in the bathtub as a toddler, for spooning dirt as a pre-schooler, and for holding her valuable collection of seashells now as a school age child. Looking at the outside of the mug, no one would have guessed how much of the giver's self is represented. With that in mind, though, what an honor such a gift would be!

The gifts that children make themselves may take on particular significance, because within the object given lies all of the pleasure that the child felt in making it. In fact, for young children, the process of making something is generally more important than the product itself.

Kevin's father found that out, by accident, when he happened to meet his son's teacher in a store during the week of Christmas. She began by telling him how delighted she was to finally meet him, because his son talked about him all of the time. She went on to describe how industrious Kevin was, especially when he was making things. "That pencil holder, for example", he worked so long on it and had such fun with the paint and the paste". Several times I heard him tell the others that he was making it for his dad's office. Then she added, "He sure put a lot of himself into that gift".

After that conversation, the crude looking pencil holder took on new dimensions for Kevin's father- inner dimensions. Maybe the most important insight he gained was that the gift was more than a place to put pencils: It was a container that held love. So what was it doing on the hall table?

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When Kevin's father came home, he told his son how glad he was to have met his teacher. Then he made a point of asking Kevin to bring over the pencil holder and tell him how he made it. He assured his son it was going to have a special place on his desk at the office. "When I'm away at work, your present will remind me of how important you are in my life".

When we get a gift from a child, we, too, may sometimes wonder, "What have we here?"

The chances are we have a lot- a lot more than it seems- because so often the gift and the giver are closely entwined. It may help to remember that showing appreciation for the one is a way to show love for the other.