

# A Christmas letter to the Keenan family (21, 12, 13)

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Each year, I write a Christmas letter to my family such that they will know precisely what I want and what I don't want to help avoid acrimony and name-calling during what is supposed to be a festive season. If you are having similar difficulties with your adult children, feel free to use my letter as a template for your loved ones. Here it goes:



“Some of you have indicated that I am impossible to buy for at Christmas, that in fact, I have everything that I could possibly need, and that you really can't come up with anything new, and I realize that this might frustrate you because Christmas is truly the time of giving, and I have a long memory so, for example, I recall the discounted tie that one of you bought me last year that I now use as a belt around my bathrobe and the shoddy pair of socks that I poked my big toe through upon first trying to fit them on and the silly Andy Williams' Christmas music CD and, by the way, are you not aware that I can download music for free off the Internet – so this brings me back to appropriate gifts for a person who has observed many Christmas mornings come and go and remembers the trauma of always getting new polo pajamas and underwear as a kid when friends were getting CCM bikes and Lionel train sets and Roy Rogers and Gene Autry cowboy outfits, and don't think that that hasn't bothered me for a long time, causing me to doubt my parents' love, forcing me to think that perhaps I was adopted or merely left at their doorstep in hopes that they might raise me to become the success that I am today, a mere shadow of what I could have been if I was truly loved, appreciated, nurtured and given gifts that more properly demonstrated true affection rather than the embarrassing items I received, the kind that you don't even find in garage sales anymore because people would be too uncomfortable selling such tawdry objects as opposed to wrapping them in the dead of night and placing them in the bottom of the garbage bag so as to provide the decent burial they should have received, and why is it that most of this stuff comes from China?

“To alleviate your misery, I have composed a short list of suitable Christmas presents. I don't want any of you to spend over \$100 because I know that you are relatively young compared to me and just finding your way. Yes, your mother and I have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars on you and yes, we understood that having children would cause us to curtail most of our travel plans and live well below the standard that we deserved, but that is part of the joy of raising children, little beings who need constant care and attention and car rides to piano lessons and ballet and girl guides and oh, the list goes on, seemingly forever, so remember, I do not want you to spend a lot of money on me because that would only make me feel guilty, and having been raised Catholic, believe me, I shoulder more than enough guilt to last a lifetime. Anything that prevents constipation and perhaps some moustache dye might be in order.



“Please do not go to any expense with fancy wrapping paper and coloured ribbons and such. This only brings back bad memories of the paltry presents that I used to get when I was a kid, things my parents, if they really were my parents, would customarily wrap in old Eaton's and Simpson's catalogues, usually the sections that advertised bright, shiny bikes and sleds and neat train sets that my friends already had, but which they allowed me to play with, probably out of some sense of pity. Did I mention that I was raised Catholic?

“Love, Dad.”