

## The art of making memories

It was a bleak day, raining and cold. Vic and Liz were out shopping with their three year old son. Liz pushed the child's stroller while Vic walked along side holding the umbrella. 'Next stop's the post office,' said Liz. 'I've got some letters to post.'

As they approached the red box Vic reached for the letters which, like them, were slowly being soaked. Liz held on to one envelope.

'C'mon,' said Vic impatiently. 'Let's just mail it and go.'

'I want Francis to post this one himself,' said Liz gently but firmly. So there in the midst of the drizzling rain Vic stood and waited while Liz lifted Francis from his stroller and held him as he struggled to push the envelope down the mail chute. Vic was becoming irritated. He was about to say how stupid he thought the whole exercise to be when Francis reached across and gave him a hug saying, 'I send Gramma her birthday card myself!'

Vic recalls that the incident left him speechless. 'Liz had often talked about creating memorable moments for our kids,' he says. 'Here she was creating one for me. It was with my own mother that our son was developing a beautiful bond. If I had had my way, my haste and efficiency would have denied us all of a treasured grace in our lives.'

The gospel wisdom in this story shines a spotlight on our sense of priorities. Such an

incongruous scene. There in the midst of our comfort-obsessed, fast-everything society, stands a threesome huddled over a post box in the rain. The child reaches up to post a precious letter. He is held by his mother, sheltered by his father. It is an image of the Holy Family worth pondering as we begin preparations for Christmas.

Like the Christ-child in the nativity crib we can look upon such scenes as simply cute and endearing. On the other hand we can look to their deeper meaning: God is with us. When we stop and face our God-given capacity to love and be loved we experience our humanity as blessed and permeated by grace. One of the ways we communicate this truth is through the creation of loving memories.

What does it mean to create a loving memory? It means to take an ordinary situation and seize upon its potential as an occasion for joy, laughter, wonder and intimacy; to turn it into an event that will be spoken of with fondness in years to come. 'Remember the time we got creamed in the basketball final and we decided to celebrate "our worst score ever"? Dad popped the champagne and everything!' 'Remember when we were kids Mum would let us make our own birthday cakes. They tasted terrible but gosh we had fun.' If you are a family with 'remember whens' like these you are blessed indeed!

The approach of Christmas with all its 'must dos' - from

shopping and cooking to planning holidays and liturgies - is a rich opportunity for making memories. Paradoxically, the pressure-cooker feel at this time of year can make Christmas seem more like a litany of chores than a celebration of love. Surely a vital challenge for contemporary Christians is to develop the art of enjoying Christmas; an enjoyment that stems from a material simplicity that makes room for our delight in one another and the gift of our Saviour. Our joy will come at a price. We will have to sacrifice some of our efficiency and perfection for so-called 'wasted time' and 'poor results'. In years to come our material proficiency will be forgotten. Our memories of love and faith will be our enduring treasures. •

