

Making the best of requests to Santa

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As we approach Christmas Day and all that it brings, no doubt most of our youngsters have had the chance to sit on Santa's lap and whisper into his ear.

It's an annual tradition that is seldom missed.

At our household, photos with Santa are a must, and if you line up them, you can see a chronology of visits, and see, before your eyes, how our kids have grown.

With three youngsters, Santa has needed some help in fine-tuning our family's list and gathering the items from all over the world. My eldest provided a written list back in November, but the younger ones were a bit of a challenge this year. They didn't ask for much, which is kind of odd, considering kids always ask for the moon.

I'm not sure if they're taking some of life's lessons to heart, or have run out of toys and games!

Santa shared the contents of their letters with me and I was able to solicit a response from the man himself.

Dear Santa,

?This year the only thing I want is for everyone to have a great Christmas season,? Liam, 12.

Dear Liam,

?I was so pleased to read your letter, it made my day!

The Christmas season is my favourite time of year as you can imagine. Spreading cheer to young and old alike, around the world for hundreds of years has been my number-one responsibility. I will admit it's not always easy.

But what I can share with you is this. ?If just one person, you perhaps, starts feeling the spirit of the season and being kinder and nicer to your family and friends, it will grow and grow. Kindness knows no bounds and it can literally stretch right around the world. Trust me, I've seen it.

What I would say to people is open your hearts, embrace what you have and enjoy the warmth and good cheer of the season. And yes, you are allowed to eat a few extra goodies this time of year!?

All the best, Santa

Dear Santa,

?This year I really haven't been doing so well ? I just can't get into the Christmas spirit. I would really appreciate a sign to remind me of the importance of the holiday season. And maybe, if you have a chance on Christmas Eve, you could pay a visit to Africa, Haiti, Dominican Republic (all the places experiencing poverty) and give them what they deserve ? love and hope. I'm looking forward to seeing your reindeer on my roof,? Lexie, 15.

Dear Lexie,

The Christmas spirit never leaves you, it just sometimes gets lost in all the hustle and bustle of the season, school and sports commitments, and the pressures of the world.

But believe me, it lives in you, I can feel it, all the way up here at the North Pole.

I've been watching you lately, and let me say that your heart is as big and sweet as a bowl of sugar plums! I have seen your compassion towards others - your friends, family and the less fortunate through your volunteer work.

This is a quality that can't be taught or given to someone. It's inside you and it's all you.

Maybe because of some of the things you've seen, you feel you can do more. I know what you're talking about. I see many needy kids every year and I do my best to put a smile on each and every one of their faces. I do visit every country and children of all shapes, sizes and colours.

It's tough sometimes. But I'm not discouraged. Just one smile, a tiny bit of love and hope, can change the world. Hope is a lot like belief - it's powerful stuff you know, even stronger than my magic.

You asked for a sign, but you don't really need one. As I said, it's inside you - I see the sparkle in your eyes. It's not unlike the one I had when I was a youngster - wide-eyed wonderment at the world, wanting to help everyone and make this a better place. I've been hard at work for hundreds of years. How do you think I have done?

My reindeer will land on your roof again this Christmas Eve, so don't forget to leave them a snack.

Your Friend, Santa

Dear Santa,

How are you and how is Mrs. Claus? How are the reindeer? This Christmas I would like a play house that is human sized so I can play in it. Santa, for others that are poor or on the street struggling, I want them to have a shelter, food and water because nobody should be alone on Christmas, Kyleigh, 8.

Dear Kyleigh,

So nice to hear from you again this year.

I have heard you have been pretty good, and I know you are trying to get along better with your brother. Trust me on this one, you and Liam will become best friends when you're older.

A human-sized playhouse, eh? Santa doesn't really make buildings for kids, and my magic is limited to toys and things of the heart. Santa can't make cars, houses or flying saucers, even though kids always ask for them.

How about a beautiful doll house?

As far as helping the poor, Santa always tries to help as many people as he can. I have a lot of helpers around the world who do good work. I try to make sure those living on the streets in colder climates get a helping hand, food and a warm bed at night.

You know what's a start? Little ones like you asking. When you care about others, it creates a warm feeling, like a blanket, that we can use to wrap around our fellow men and women.

The Care Meter on my sleigh fluctuates from time to time, but all in all, it seems to be in the green. We need to keep it up, not just at Christmas time, but all year long. And you're quite right, no one should be alone on Christmas.

But if we keep them in our thoughts and prayers, we help spread love and the true meaning of Christmas.

I'll make sure you get something special for your thoughts.

Keep touching my nose on the sculpture in your foyer for good luck!

Love, Santa

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,

Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night!