

Believing IS Seeing

NEVER THE OTHER WAY AROUND! Isn't that what this season is all about? The ability to believe in something bigger than ourselves must FIRST begin in our hearts or that belief is sure to fail.

Believe in what your heart is saying

Hear the melody that's playing

There's no time to waste

There's so much to celebrate

Believe in what you feel inside

And give your dreams the wings to fly

You have everything you need

If you just believe.

We wrapped up our Christmas celebration at the home of my mother's sister. The last few days have seen sickness, some frustration, and I believe a LOT of love. Christmas Eve, we had our immediate family celebration. Alyssa was not feeling well but by the time the celebration began, she was well enough to eat a pickle and a deviled egg. Not my first choice after having a sour stomach but she kept it down. Alex also was feeling under the weather but came later and opened his gifts by himself.

Something new this year (prompted by the craziness of Santa's busy schedule) was the exchanging of names to fill each other's stockings. Some of us grumbled not knowing what to get each other but in the end, I think it worked out well and I hope the tradition continues. People just had to use their imagination (if they have one). I was pleased with my

stocking stuffers choices.

Christmas Eve mass was even earlier than the 11PM of years past. I was pleased to see some more male voices come up to the loft as Chad and I are typically the sole men in the choir. Cousin Dan from Sandusky, JJ (a wonderful tenor), and a few others joined us. Really glad for that because some of the rafter reachers would have drowned us out for sure. Apparently, what must have been a traditional piece in years past was revisited. "The Bells of St. Mary" hopefully will become another fitting tradition along with "For Unto Us A Child Is Born."

After Chad dropped me off after mass, Mom came out and told us that she had to take Dad yet again to the ER. Complaining of stomach and chest pains and diarrhea. So we all headed to the hospital. I won't say "fortunately", but it could have been worse than dehydration. He had to have two units of IV fluids pumped into him. This year has been just a BIT scary and hopefully soon, we can get some answers as to what is going on. But until then, I personally need to really focus on stepping back when things get out of control.

After getting 4-5 hours of sleep, I had planned on attending services at the church being ministered by my pal who just continues to amaze me. I was so psyched that I did because he seemed to be surprised that I did. As an added present, he sang the beautiful "Mary, Did You Know?" Chris has such a tremendous voice that when he uses it gives each listener a extraordinary gift! It is also so inspiring to see how much he has personally come to accept his savior...a beautiful sight.

I was so thankful that I got to see the people I choose to include in my extended family on one of the most joyous days of the year.

Dinner Christmas Day was served at Jeff's kitchen. Before that however, Shelby sprained her ankle pretty badly when she climbed the stairs at my house in the dark. She had to be

taken to have it checked out for severity.

Today, the celebration continued at the Maxwell Country Estate where both of Mom's siblings and their families gathered. I always enjoy being regaled by stories of their youth and today was no exception. Jeff, Alicia, and I played Words With Friends via iPhone or in my case iPod. My oldest brother CHEATS with an app that actually says "Cheats With Friends."

Later, Dan and Carla tried to teach some of us how to play Mah'Jong. If I had been lucky enough to draw some good tiles in the three rounds we played... Of course, if we had had more time to play I might have caught on.

I hope you all are having a beautiful holiday season full of love and true belief.