

PURE RELIGION

A Small Gift

Sometimes the world of a small child is filled with things that are anything but small. For far too many children, life is overfilled with the unspeakable horrors of child abuse; the unrelenting grief that comes from the loss of loved ones; the deep aching that comes from unexpected, unexplainable tragedy.

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How such small packages can endure the measureless terrors of grief and gnawing fear is perhaps more than any one of us can comprehend.

Some of these small children are taken from their homes in the middle of the night and end up in police stations or in hospital waiting rooms while they wait for social workers to find a place for them—a process that can sometimes take days.

In response, the Children's Hospital Los Angeles, California, created a "Rest Assured" program, supported by the Orfalea Family Foundation, that offers a warm, comforting place for distressed children. They provide meals, a safe place to sleep, and lots of love and reassurance.

"Last week," says Dr. Anita Britt, Executive Director of the program, "a little girl, 8-years old, and her baby brother, 10-months old, came to us about midnight. We seldom know the details about the children; in this case, we just know their mother had been arrested."

Among the things they provide for the children are bags that contain stuffed animals, coloring books, and other toys. Many of these bags contain a quilt made by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When this young girl received her quilt she held it against her face and asked, "Is it really mine? I never had anything so soft." When she learned that the quilt really did belong to her and that there was one for her brother as well, the little girl wrapped her little brother in his quilt and then folded herself inside hers. Then, they both fell asleep.

"I wish you could be with me in the middle of the night," Dr. Britt says, "and see a child come here tired, hungry, dirty, and frightened. It doesn't take long before they are clean, fed, and asleep with a new blanket and soft toy.

"I make quilts myself, so I know how much time and love goes into each one. I know these quilts were made in a church meeting hall somewhere by women who had no idea where they would go or who they would comfort. I wanted them to know that because of them, a child has something new, clean, and made with love for perhaps the first time in their lives."

Sometimes—perhaps we can never know how often—our acts of compassion, though seemingly small, can make a difference.

Sometimes it's the smallest things that change the world—even if the world that is changed is that of a small child.

