

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Nov 3rd 2015

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them.” Romans

was behind a woman with Downs Syndrome in a grocery store line and impatient to get home to fix dinner after a hard day at work. She had only a few items but it was taking her forever because she couldn't figure out how to pay for them.

Patience is not one of my major gifts or virtues and all I could think was “why me” as customers in other lines speeded through checking out. But something about the woman got to me. Maybe it was the Holy Spirit.

The teen-age clerk rang up the woman's items then calmly asked her to lay her money on the counter so she could help her pay. When the woman fumbled, the clerk gently helped her count out a few dollars and some coins. All the while, the woman chatted with the clerk about what a beautiful day it was.

Suddenly it WAS a beautiful day, even for me.

I sensed that the woman had given both the clerk and me a gift that not one of my Ph.D. colleagues or hard-charging relatives could have delivered.

As St. Paul tells us, we have many gifts. Certainly we teach and exhort. Many of us give generously. But the woman with Downs Syndrome had given me a rare gift in a life hell bent on getting stuff done— to savor each moment even if it wasn't an item on my “to do” list.

When I reached the conveyer belt, I unloaded my things and resisted the urge to hug the clerk for doing an “act of mercy with cheerfulness.” I did tell her what a nice person she was. She beamed.

I left the store feeling calm and at peace. I'd get home and fix dinner a lot more relaxed if that developmentally “challenged” woman hadn't stumbled into my path. Driving home, I noticed our beautiful sunset and not just the red light that gave me a few extra moments to savor it.

St. Paul tells us to exercise our gifts. We also need to recognize and accept gifts from others since we are “one Body in Christ and individually, parts of one another.”

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