



The Gift of Helping a Stranger

Last summer, I ran out of gas at a gas station. The car stopped moving a few yards from the pump. To my great relief, another customer came over and offered to push my car to the pump. Before this kind, young person drove away, I shouted "Wait!" and hurried toward him.

He shook his head from side to side. "I don't want anything for helping you," he declared. "Not even homemade chocolate chip cookies?" I countered. He laughed, took the bag of cookies, and thanked me.

When we share the gift of being human beings together, especially in difficult moments, we slip into an awareness of abundance. We feel full. We know goodness given and received. Travels continue. Cookies and laughter are enjoyed. Every good gift comes from God, and in sharing our gifts we become even more gifted, whether or not we are recognized or rewarded for sharing.

Sometimes we step up to help from a desire for recognition. We offer our gifts, like James and John in today's Gospel text, out of loyalty to Jesus and a desire to be useful. Our egos may be attached in healthy, or unhealthy, ways.

Sometimes we share a gift without expectations. We give without needing recognition. We push a car for a stranger and get a tired priest, her daughter and two dogs back on the road to Vacationland.

Making an annual financial commitment to a congregation is like offering to push a stranger's car to a gas pump. It gets ministry moving. We seek no recognition, yet are rewarded in surprising ways. We offer our gifts because doing so creates the type of world we want to inhabit — a world where strangers collaborate and laugh together during a frustrating and embarrassing experience, sharing every good gift along the way.

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