

Amazed by Grace

By Linda Weaver

Grace was amazing. I met her when she was 74 and legally blind from macular degeneration. She had survived 36 operations and had now come to live with her son. I was asked to take communion to Grace. Before I met her, I had a preconceived idea of what our relationship would be like: I was ministering to someone who needed me. Period. Grace changed the way I would look at everyone and the way I would see ministry forever.

At 5' 2" and 110 pounds, Grace was the most cheerful person I had ever met. Despite challenges that would have defeated many, her voice was tinged with excitement over life. She was a woman of childlike faith, and immense hope and love. She shared herself with others freely.

Alone, she took a special bus to various shopping centers. On the bus, she listened to the troubles of a young mother and comforted her. While sitting on the bench at Wal-Mart waiting for the bus to pick her up, she listened to the teen sitting next to her—something the teen seemed to need.

She talked gently to the elderly man in the grocery store who had lost his wife and was grocery shopping, perhaps for the first time in his life. She loved to talk, but she also loved to listen.

Grace was a person that others, including me, needed. She was someone who should be involved in ministry not just someone being ministered to. She and I became a pastoral care team. She had great qualities and talents that I didn't have. I could see and drive, which was all she needed.

We were perfect for each other. We visited people who were coping with macular degeneration, and they drew strength from Grace's courage. Grace could

reach them in ways I couldn't. We visited other senior ladies, and Grace could reminisce with them about things that were just history to me. Grace was a person with an immense capacity to evangelize. Grace could take Christ to people in a way that I could not.

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God rather than the eyes of man. She shattered my preconceptions about who should and could be an evangelizer. As we begin a new year, let's begin with new vision. Let's see through the eyes of God, and ask: How can each person take Christ to others? Can I help someone become the evangelizer he was meant to be? Is there a way I can team with someone to be a more effective evangelizer? How might our ministry program be more creative to encourage everyone to get involved?

To get you started here is an example: Young parents shy away from bringing their children to Mass, especially if only one attends. At the same time, your parish has people who love children, but don't have any to bring to church at this time in their life.

Why not have a volunteer corps of people willing to simply meet the family at the church and sit with them during the service to help with the children. The parent feels welcome and is more likely to come (you might even attract new families to your parish); the volunteer is doing meaningful, joyful work that encourages people to attend Mass; the children will be raised attending every week. It is a win-win, as I see it. For 2007 resolve to be creative and to see through the eyes of God. Grace was amazing—as a person and as an evangelizer. You can be amazing too. Believe it.

Weaver is a member of the archdiocesan Evangelization Committee.

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