

Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2016

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When asked how I live the spiritual works and corporal works of mercy in my life I immediately think of a lady named Regina. I was driving down Glenway Avenue with my mom and sister on an extremely cold Sunday afternoon. From the warmth of our car we witnessed a lady struggling to walk with a walker up a hill in 9 degree weather. We decided to turn around at the first chance we had to see if we could help her. We pulled into a driveway in front of her and offered her a ride. We quickly realized that she was deaf and unable to speak. We were able to determine that she was going to Kroger which was still 5 blocks away. She accepted our offer to help but it was very difficult for this woman to get into our car. She was in bad physical shape and had braces on both legs. We realized that she did not have much control of her legs from the knee down and had to use her upper body to lift her legs into the car. I watched from the passenger seat as my mom pushed this lady into the car. It was hard to see her struggle doing something that I easily do each day. I was sad and realized how blessed I am to have a strong, healthy body. Once she made it into our vehicle, we pulled out a notebook and introduced ourselves. With a kind smile she wrote that her name was Regina. My mom asked her where else she was going today. Her reply was "just Kroger's and then home". My mom wrote down her cell phone number and asked her to text us when she was done shopping and we could take her home. Her address was about 5 miles away. We knew that she would barely be able to make it to a bus stop with bags of groceries much less all the way home. She slid out of the car and we got her situated in a motorized cart. Off she went on her mission to get groceries and we went on with our errands. After a couple of hours passed we were beginning to think Regina was not going to take us up on our offer to give her a ride home. We had just walked in the door to our house when the phone rang. It was a worker from Kroger's letting us know that Regina was ready to go home. We immediately walked back out, hopped back into the car and to headed to Kroger. She was anxiously waiting for us. My sisters and I loaded her walker and four heavy bags of groceries into the back of the car while my mom assisted her into the front seat. We drove her to her apartment, walked down 7 steps to the door, placed her bags in the kitchen and hugged Regina goodbye.

We drove in silence all the way home. I think we were all thinking the same thing. I knew my mom was because I saw tears rolling down her cheeks. Regina transformed me. Her strength inspired me. Her determination to overcome her disabilities that day was incredible. She was extraordinary. Showing Regina mercy was empowering and spiritual. I felt honored to be the one that was able to make her life a little easier that day. She cannot hear. She cannot speak. She has to think and put immense effort into each and every step in order to walk yet I didn't see her as weak. All I could see was unbelievable strength. Simple things like getting out of bed, chatting with a friend, and walking on sunny day were strenuous task for Regina. I thanked God that night and every day since for my many blessings. I also wondered why she was alone that day and where her family was. When I was younger I was in a wheelchair for three months because of a broken femur. I had visitors daily, neighbors made us meals, friends brightened my day with cards, and I was surrounded with love and encouragement. Was Regina alone? Had she been lost in the shuffle? Where was her support. We are so blessed to live in this catholic west side community. I am so very thankful that by showing Regina compassion I was reminded NOT to take this for granted. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." I am aware of my blessings, my heart is full, and God is more present in my life because of the day my family was merciful like the Father.

We made a card for Regina to tell her how much we enjoyed meeting her and that she could text us anytime for help. My mom put a fuzzy blanket, flowers, and our card on her doorstep. We pray for her and all who struggle daily. God worked through Regina that cold winter day. Regina reminds me to live both corporal works and spiritual works of mercy in my daily life. I am less likely to complain and more likely to count my blessings. I am less likely to get angry and more likely to be patient with my siblings. I am less likely to gossip and more likely to include someone that is being left out. I am less likely to want and more likely to give. I am less likely to judge someone that is different than me and more likely to pray for them. I am less likely to hold a grudge and more likely to forgive. I am less likely to see imperfections in others and more likely to see their strengths. I am less likely to be lazy and more

likely to be active. The quote "What if you wake up tomorrow with only the things you thanked God for today" inspires me daily to be prayerful, merciful and deeply thankful. These are the ways I live with the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in my life.