

A Mid-day Meditation

From

Sue's Perspective

*"It's about being in the wrong place at the right time..." – Anonymous*

Several years ago, after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, a colleague of mine and I took several people and supplies to Camp Coast Care in Long Beach, Mississippi to volunteer in helping with the clean-up. We crossed the Canada/USA border in Sarnia. I chose what appeared to be the line that was moving fastest...or so I thought. After waiting for an exceptionally long time, I muttered to myself as I watched the staff change at the booth, "of course I had to pick the wrong line." There was an inspection of the van I was driving and its contents, after which the border crossing official asked me, "Why are you coming and bringing all these things to the people down there?" I replied, "Because the people there need our help and I would hope and pray that if ever there was devastation like this in our country, that you would feel the need to help us out...and by the way, we are travelling with the vehicle behind us where you will find more people and more supplies." The border official suggested an area for me to park while I waited for the following vehicle. The inspection of that vehicle took very little time and before long we were on the road. Even being in the wrong line for the sake of expediency...

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While we were at Camp Coast Care, we met people from all over the United States, some of whom we are still in contact with. During our time there, we discovered that you never know when or how you touch the hearts of the people. At one point, my daughter, who had come with us, and I were sitting at a table eating a meal. The person who was in the role of cook approached us and asked us if we would mind helping out in the kitchen. It wasn't quite what we had in mind as volunteering for the hurricane survivors. However, we soon came to realize that the people out working to rebuild houses or clean up debris needed to be well fed, so we agreed to be kitchen staff. The next thing I knew, the cook was asking if I would take over for a few days because he hadn't had a day off or spent time with his family in weeks. As I think back on that adventure, little did I know that helping meant more than rebuilding or cleaning up...

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Each evening, the volunteers gathered together to report on the day's activities. Two stories come to mind immediately. The first is of a priest of the diocese of Mississippi who was with us at the camp. Her name is Elizabeth Wheatley-Jones. While we were assembled one evening, it was announced that Elizabeth was being appointed to a new parish – Christ Episcopal Church in Bay St. Louis. I had been to see that church and all that was left of it was the bell tower. It seemed to me that Elizabeth was in for a challenge. As it turned out, she rebuilt Christ Church – not single-handedly, of course – but she was the right person to lead the congregation at that time in their history. She was in the wrong place at precisely the right time. The second story was told by a crew of people who had been sent into the community to help a couple with some rebuilding of their home. When they knocked on the door, the man who answered was surprised to see them. The crew leader explained that they had been notified of the crew's arrival. The elderly gentleman did not recall being

informed. As it turned out, the crew was, in fact at the wrong house. But they continued to work away doing the repairs needed. During the time the crew was there, the man told them that just as they knocked on the door, he and his wife were about to close themselves in the kitchen with the gas turned on because they were feeling that they would never be able to recover from the devastation to their home and their lives and that death was the only way out. The couple were so very thrilled that the crew had gone to the wrong address. God works through people in the most unexpected ways...

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