



## ***“No wordy prayers can ever replace that moment”***

*By Limeteze Pierre-Gilles, SSND*

As a Novice in the congregation of the School Sister of Notre Dame, I volunteer at My Brother’s Keeper twice a week delivering furniture and food to those in need. Memories of the families we serve wind through my mind every night. Just before I sleep, their stories play and replay themselves like a movie on a big screen. Some I will never forget for their stories are filled with faith and hope. I find a loving and transformative message attached to each one of them.

And while I am very grateful for the privilege to serve others through My Brother’s Keeper, I am more grateful to discover the reciprocity of our work: those we serve at My Brother’s Keeper, serve us as well. The enrichment is mutual.

One morning we met Rosa, a grandmother from Puerto Rico. She had been living in her apartment with nothing in it— no bed, no furniture at all. As we brought furniture in one piece at a time I wondered, How many more women have to sleep on the floor? While we worked, Jim Orcutt talked to Rosa to put her at ease. We listened to stories about her children, her grandchildren, and about her father who is still in Puerto Rico. When her brand new bed was put together, she thought that was it, and said, “*Thank you! Thank you so much!*”

However, there *was* one more thing, one more gift: a crucifix. “*This is the man who sent the furniture to you,*” we said. The tender look on Rosa’s face while looking at the crucifix was nothing but loving gratitude to her God. Days and nights of prayers were now answered! No wordy prayers can ever replace that moment. Rosa’s deep contemplative look set me thinking about my own way of praying.

Another morning we visited Paul, a father who needed only a twin bed for his son. I have seen men who are too proud to ask for help when in need. This father wanted to do the right thing for his son— to make sure he would never have to sleep on the floor again. As I served Paul, memories of my own father, now in heaven, filled my thoughts. My father would do *everything* to provide for his children. Whether it was paying tuition or putting food on the table, he was never afraid or ashamed to knock on some doors. That day I prayed for Paul’s child... that when he becomes a man, he will remember how much his father loved and cared for him.

That day was one of the many occasions I’ve felt grateful not just for my own father, but for all those who work to assist those in need; those who help to build better communities for our sisters and brothers so that they too can “*reach the fullness of their potential as individuals created in God’s image.*” (from ***You Are Sent***, the constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame)

Paul expressed his belief very strongly when accepting the crucifix. He said, “*Jesus always takes care of me. He gives me everything. I am trying to do what he wants me to do.*” He even expressed an interest in volunteering sometime later in his life. Like Rosa, Paul is a testimony of faith for me.

These people— single mothers, single fathers, married couples, black or white, immigrants or not— are always very grateful for the help we give. Some silently, some effusively share their faith. The privilege of experiencing their joy, their faith and their gratitude helps *me* grow in faith, hope and love. It broadens my horizon and confirms my belief that God is present in everybody and in everything.

Isn’t that also a great service to me?



*Co-founder Jim Orcutt and Limeteze Pierre-Gilles, a novice with the School Sister of Notre Dame who is volunteering at My Brother’s Keeper as part of her formation process. She is originally from Haiti.*