

Perspectives

A friend shared with me this anecdote, which I love for what it tells us about being awake to the gift of the present moment.

It was Sunday morning in a quiet little pocket of suburbia. I had just walked down to the corner store to buy a newspaper and - lo and behold - there was a queue.

I hate queues! This is ridiculous, I thought to myself as the minutes ticked by. All I want is a newspaper! The delay was connected with an old man at the counter. There was obviously some confusion in the exchange of money and goods. The shopkeeper, normally so efficient, seemed to be taking forever to serve him.

Another minute or so ticked by and I was furious. C'mon. Hurry up! At that point, the shopkeeper gently moved the man aside and I heard him say: 'Now Sam, you go out the back there and I'll make you a cup of coffee in just a moment.'

Immediately the situation took on a new perspective. I looked at the old man again and noticed the hole in the back of his sweater, his unkempt hair and shoeless feet. My impatience dissolved into shame. I was witnessing not an inefficient storekeeper but a lesson in practical Christianity.

The incident has stuck in my mind. I have resolved to change my sometimes arrogant attitude when I find myself irritated by the apparent incompetence of

other people. Rather than judge people too quickly, I want to be able to move 'out of myself' and look at things from another's perspective.

The next time I was in the shop I decided to say something affirming to the shopkeeper about what I had observed. He wasn't there. Behind the counter was a younger man. Feeling a little self-conscious, I told him the whole story with a 'Thanks, keep up the good work.'

The young man gave me a knowing smile. 'That would have been my Dad serving you,' he said. 'He's always helping people out - giving credit, offering cups of coffee, having a chat. I'm not sure what it costs us commercially, but we wouldn't have it any other way.' •

