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## **In giving to others he was giving back to God**

**by Frances Molloy – Pastoral Care Project Charity No 1094766**

Some years ago I during one of my visits to a care home I came across an elderly resident I will call him Andrew, not his real name. He had just moved into the home and as he was Catholic so I invited him to join the small group to receive Holy Communion. His initial appearance was that of contentment. However, on one of the visits I noticed that his demeanour had changed, he seemed very withdrawn, the joy during Holy Communion was no longer there. I was concerned as to what had happened and so I enquired with a member of staff about his health, she reassured me he was ok, he was just confused; quiet, no trouble – the resident every home would want to have.

Over the next few weeks I saw that he was unhappy and so I decided to spend some time with him after Holy Communion. Even though he was somewhat confused, he wanted to talk and he could still tell stories in the way only people of his generation did. He told me about some things which we might think were long ago - they were – but for him they reminded him of what was currently missing in his life. He spoke of how hard he had worked throughout his life and the pleasure he got from being with and giving to others; be it his family, the church or neighbours, both in giving donations and his time, always with a cheerful smile. In giving to others he was giving back to God who gave to him so much throughout his life.

Now he said, ‘I have nothing left to give, it is hard.’ He spoke at some length about his faith and his feelings, often with misty eyes. He may have been somewhat confused but he was very aware and in touch with how his life was now, sad and he felt alone with all of his money except for a few pounds given to help pay for this care.

Expressing his feelings did ease the heaviness of his heart. He was keen to listen when I mentioned to him that he was still giving to God and to others but in a new way. I explained to him how the money he gave contributed to the wages of the staff and carers who in turn needed it to provide for their families. Andrew had never thought of it that way before which seemed to give him a sense peace - he no longer felt he was a burden. This renewed his sense of dignity and purpose which remained with him throughout the time I knew him. He was such a hospitable man, who loved life, loved to pray and to receive Holy Communion as well as enjoy the friendship of others.

Over the last twenty five years with the Pastoral Care Project I have been privileged to have shared in the faith journey of many people, whether they were the frail elderly, family carers or parish volunteers. We often share their sense of vulnerability of fear and frustration but the Holy Spirit creates a sense of awareness when we are with them so that we have a shared collective memory of knowing that each one of us is much loved by God. God loved us long before we had any sense of awareness of him.

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