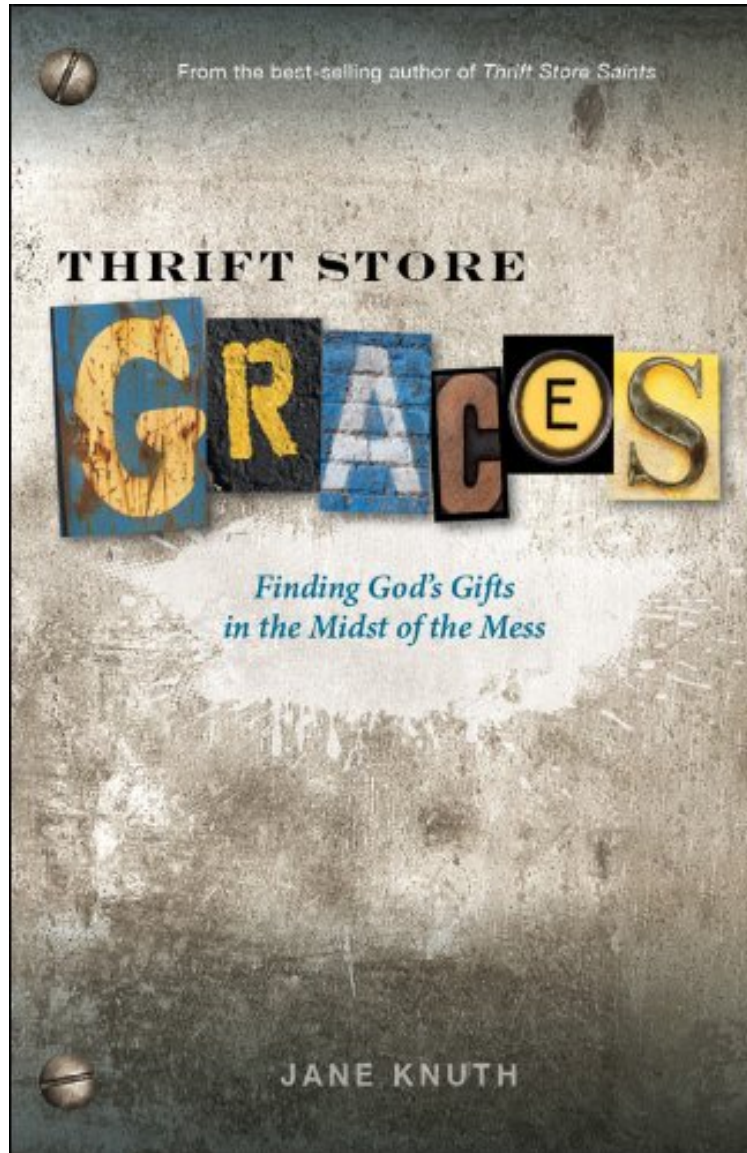


Thrift Store Graces: Finding God's Gifts in the Midst of the Mess

Jane Knuth

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Jane Knuth : Thrift Store Graces: Finding God's Gifts in the Midst of the Mess before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thrift Store Graces: Finding God's Gifts in the Midst of the Mess:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A thrift store's surprising giftsBy N. B. KennedyI took this book and Jane Knuth's first book, Thrift Store Saints, with me on vacation last week. These two books about her volunteer work with the poor through the St. Vincent de Paul Society might seem an odd choice for a vacation that put us squarely in the ranks of the privileged, but it was the perfect time to contemplate this author's many subtle and nuanced spiritual

insights. Ms. Knuth has volunteered at a thrift store in Kalamazoo, Michigan, run by this Catholic charitable organization for almost 20 years. In her books are tales of her encounters with customers at the store and in the surrounding neighborhood. The refreshing thing about her point of view, however, is that she doesn't consider herself to be serving the poor, or teaching the poor, or in any way condescending to a class of people not her own. She has wholeheartedly assumed the Society's position that the people she helps are her teachers, and she their student. That simple, yet profound, shift in thinking informs Ms. Knuth's every interaction. It produces a curiosity and humility that makes her storytelling so very touching. Yet Ms. Knuth is no saint! She is honest about her struggles to help people who might be lying to her, people who don't smell good or who are drunk and abusive, people who -- as one of the ongoing stories in this book reveals -- rob her while brazenly turning an innocent face to the world. In this book, Ms. Knuth's stories at the shop are intertwined with tales of her reluctant pilgrimage to Medjugorje in the war-ravaged country of Bosnia, where the Mother Mary has been said to appear every day since 1981 to a group of six young people. Her gentle humor reveals her growing appreciation of the pilgrimage: "One of the first things Our Blessed Mother told the visionaries when she arrived in their town was that everyone needed to go to Mass more often," she writes. "This is one of the most convincing elements of the whole apparition story for me. The visionaries were teenagers when all this started... and teenagers would not make this part up." Perhaps what I most appreciated about Ms. Knuth's books is that she resists easy answers and pat endings. She fully explores ambiguous feelings, and lets herself off the hook for being woefully human. That's a grace more of us could use, whether or not we volunteer at a thrift shop.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Thank you Jane for Sharing Your God Moments By Stacie Morrell As with 'Thrift Store Saints' I was again touched by these stories and the correlation to my life. When Jane was relating her experiences on her pilgrimage, I was dismayed when she 'rejected' the 15th station of the cross, the resurrection. To me, this is the most important part of the crucifixion, not the death of Christ but his rising from the dead. I was therefore delighted when the Lord gave her abounding joy right on that mountaintop at the 15th station. After all, dying did not make Jesus our savior, everyone does that, rising again did. Thus, we can rise again when we ask him into our hearts to be our personal savior. I delight in seeing these stories, it makes me value my God Moments even more. Thank you Jane for sharing.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great second book by Jane Knuth...and so inspirational again! By Sarah I picked up Jane's first book in a Vinnies store and absolutely loved it. It didn't take me long to go looking for anything else that she had written, and I bought this book straight away. Different from the first in that it's got a greater sense of coherency as a book, whereas her first book is more a collection of stories or thoughts. This book is a great insight into the life of an everyday believer and volunteer, and gave me much to consider about my own beliefs and how I act upon them. I highly recommend this book, and will be looking forward to reading more from Jane in the future.

This "ridiculous" religious thinking—that when we help the poor, they end up helping us—is at the heart of the 30 stories that Jane Knuth shares in *Thrift Store Graces*, the sequel to her popular *Thrift Store Saints*. Similar to the first book, *Thrift Store Graces* contains personal accounts of Knuth's experiences serving as a once reluctant, now enthusiastic volunteer at a thrift store in Kalamazoo, Michigan. What sets *Thrift Store Graces* apart from her first book is that Knuth introduces us to some far more challenging personal situations that emerge as a result of her volunteer work. Additionally, she invites us to join her as she hesitantly embarks on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in war-ravaged Bosnia. Through it all, her delightful sense of humor keeps her going, along with her conviction that some of God's greatest gifts come disguised as difficulties. Witty, inspiring, and thought-provoking all at once, the stories in *Thrift Store Graces* subtly compel us to redefine what it means to volunteer and to rethink why it is that we volunteer in the first place.