

Giving Thanks for Everyday Heroes...

A recent news photo showed a young boy sitting across the lunch table from a college football star. "My son's autistic," his mom said. "This was one day I didn't have to worry about him eating alone."

A very good friend's husband fell recently and broke several bones in his spine requiring serious surgery and an extended recovery. "People took me to the hospital, washed and folded my laundry and just sat with me and gave me support," she said. "Others offered to be with me as I had a good cry... I am so blessed."

A neighborhood leader who has spearheaded many positive projects in the community is leaving just as they are beginning to come to fruition to return to her rural New England home town to help care for ill and aging parents. Though it's hard for her to leave, "it's the right thing to do," she said.

And so she freely entrusts that work to others.

A local pastor has a ministry devoted to teaching construction skills and rehabbing houses. There's a street-side garden outside the latest rehab with fresh veggies for the taking for anyone who needs or wants them.

An area community council president recognized the importance of exercise to keep residents healthy so she helped get a grant to provide outdoor exercise equipment at a neighborhood park.

Though children at her community center can't afford scouting fees, the center director developed a "Girls' Life Skills" program that works on esteem, making good choices, and fellowship.

These seemingly simple acts can make life-changing differences. While so much in our current society may seem chaotic and out of our control, each of us can say "yes" to God's often seemingly inconvenient invitations to love and show mercy in small ways each day.

There's a tendency to want recognition for good deeds but Jesus encourages us to do these things in private, not seeking reward.

Most things we're invited to do are not complicated.

Most are like the football player sitting down with the autistic boy—just a simple act of kindness recognizing

and responding to the need in the other even when we're tired or busy or cranky. It's God in them that is hungry or lonely or sad or frightened. And we get to be God's ears, God's words, God's touch for them. What a privilege that is!

So as we savor our own Thanksgiving dinners and reflect on the things that make us grateful let us not forget those who have shown God's face and love to us. Let us also ask for the grace to say "Yes" when God interrupts our plans and invites us to give that love and mercy to others.

--Angela Anno

"Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God."

- Pope Francis

