

**THE SAGA OF JOHNNY THE BAGGER**

(Jesus invites each of us to be a point of grace where he can show himself in and through us. On this feast of Mary, a story.)

Barbara Glanz, hired by a supermarket chain to present a program on building customer loyalty, told the employees that every one of them had the opportunity to make a difference. “Put your personal signature on the job,” she advised, telling them to think about what could be done to create a memory for customers to keep them coming back.

A month later she received a phone call from Johnny, age 19, who was proud to tell her that he had Downs Syndrome. “I like what you talked about,” he said, “but at first I didn’t think I could do anything special for our customers. After all I’m just a bagger.”

Johnny then said his idea was to find a “thought for the day.” With his father’s help, he printed out multiple copies, cut them apart, and signed his name on the back. After bagging someone’s groceries, he’d put a “thought for the day” in the bag with a note saying, “Thanks for shopping with us.”

The store manager also called, relating that Johnny’s checkout line was three times longer than anyone else’s. When he tried to get more cashiers, the people in line said, “No, it’s okay. We want to be in Johnny’s lane. We want his ‘thought for the day.’”

Months later the manager called again to report that Johnny had transformed their store. “Now when the Floral Department has a broken flower or unused corsage, they find an elderly woman or a little girl and pin it on them. A wonderful spirit of service has spread throughout the entire store...and all because Johnny chose to make a difference.”

(This email account, called “Johnny the Bagger,” arrived from an organization *Simple Truths of Service*. Jesus allows healing to flow out of him. Perhaps each of us allows healing to flow from us when our intention is to be of service.