'Gift from God'

I picked up the newspaper Monday morning, prepared emotionally for more depressing news about one more pedophile priest or an increase in the number of corpses found in Georgia. Surprisingly, I was impressed by the wonderful, refreshing story of Viola Cook, who cleans discarded items she recovers from garbage containers and then donates them to strangers and charitable organizations. I thought, "Now here is a great person who will receive a great reward from God at the end of life."

While many are busy committing deeds of darkness, this humble woman is busy bringing more light to our world in her own charitable way.

I am a Catholic priest and serve here in the Fresno Diocese. Wednesday evenings I teach about 20 teen-agers the doctrines, scripture, virtues and traditions of our Christian faith, preparing them for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Thanks to the article about Ms. Cook, I have one more example of selfless giving to add to my lesson plan.

Sorrowfully, I have read about babies that have been discarded like trash in garbage containers. I have witnessed children and teen-agers fussily reject particular foods and seen young people distressed over not having the best brand-named clothes because they do not fully appreciate their blessings.

Then this woman comes along and teaches us those things and unfortunately even people, which end up as garbage, are truly treasures for someone who will appreciate the gift.

Today, gratefully, I appreciate the giver, who herself is a gift from God.

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