



By Mary Kelly  
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*I AM GROWING accustomed to the grace of gradual illumination, so it is a delight and no real surprise when I see God's messages to me in the scattered rainbows on my wall at sunrise.*

~Luci Shaw in Weavings

There have been some moments during the past few months (and I know I'm not alone in this) when I felt that winter, in a literal and spiritual sense, might never end. Severe back and leg pain had been relentless for a long while despite my many, many efforts to find relief. I have always been one of those persons who feels that I can carry the summer sunshine within me...all year long. I have never let the weather bother me. I love the winter and snow and find joy in all of the seasons.

Let's just say Mary Sunshine's reputation was put to the test.

There were so many things I could not do! I have counted on my strength and fitness to take care of all that was needed and more. But even attending to injured family members in need in the way I wanted to was a real challenge, and anxiety was added to the equation.

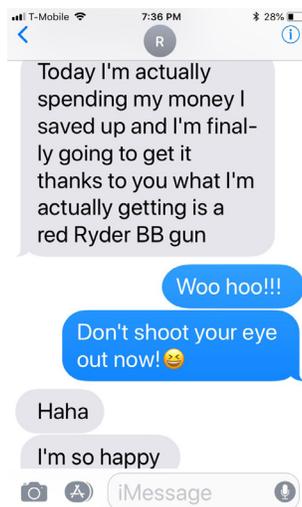
Thankfully, good friends and my daughter accompanied me and calmed me. And one very wonderful little boy brought unexpected grace in those dark months and I would like to share the story with you.

So, the many of us with bad backs know that shoveling is one activity that is absolutely out of the question. Now I have been extremely blessed with a next door neighbor who always takes the time to plow my very long driveway for me (for the past 20 years!), but, of course, there are walkways and stairs that need attending to. This became such a worry for me this year as I knew I couldn't clear them myself. I have to say I felt isolated and helpless looking out my window during one of the dark, snowy nights in January.

As the snow continued to fall the next morning, I saw one of the three young boys – the 10 year old middle son – of a family who live right across the street. Ryan, all 4 feet and 70 pounds of him, was wearing huge snow goggles and was skillfully maneuvering a too big snow blower down his own driveway. He looked very confident with himself and I trudged over to ask him if he would be interested in doing a little shoveling for me. I fully expected an eye roll or excuse as I had not had any luck over the years asking help of older kids on the block. But Ryan responded with near glee and excitement. "I'll be right over!!" And he was. Later that evening, I dropped off Ryan's "pay" in an envelope, thanking him for being such a good neighbor. He responded by thanking me profusely (a ten year old, for goodness sake!) and telling me he would be available any time it snowed. And he was. He would text before school on snowy mornings to let me know he would be on the job right after school...and he told me that "snow overs" were free (if it snowed on top of an already shoveled sidewalk). He was so gracious, so respectful, so grateful. It gave me great delight to give money to Ryan. His parents were predictably "mad", saying I gave him too much. My daughter had

babysat for the boys when they were babies, however, and these very kind and generous parents always overpaid her. I reveled in the chance to play in the abundance.

This is a text message Ryan sent a few weeks into our business partnership:



Grace, indeed. Pure delight...for Ryan and his new Red Ryder... and most especially for me. Like seeing 'God's messages to me in the scattered rainbows on my wall at sunrise'...

Since the snowing has slowed down, Ryan has continued to check in to see if I needed anything. One day while I was at work, he sent a text asking if I was okay because there was an ambulance in front of my home. I assured him that I was and smiled the rest of the day.

God sends us messages – sometimes in ways that surprise us – and often, mysteriously, when they are much needed... A ten year old checking in on a neighbor...

My Spiritual Director paid me a much appreciated house visit during this uneasy and tender season and listened with me for the many messages of God that were arising from my experience... including my Ryan story. Spiritual Direction is one of the most treasured gifts in my life. The opportunity to pay attention to where and how God is bubbling up in my life. Could this Easter season be calling you to pay attention to moments of grace in your life and story? If you would like to explore your inner life with a compassionate companion, please contact Tammy Roeder at [tammy.roeder@oldstpats.org](mailto:tammy.roeder@oldstpats.org), 312-798-2350 to learn more about the ministry of spiritual direction at Old St. Pat's.



Ryan shoveling a late night "snow over."

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