

Times Are Hard When....



By Anna Von Reitz

As children growing up in the wake of the Second World War we could always tell when times were hard by changes in the food on offer and the condition of our shoes.

When times were good, there was roast beef on Sunday and lunch meat for Father's lunch box. When times were bad, there might be peanut butter or radish or tomato sandwiches, maybe boiled eggs or hot dogs. A whole dinner might be made from corn on the cob.

Shoes were also a telltale of poverty.

In our house, every boot was always oiled. Every shoe was always polished. If we kids wanted to get into any mischief and romp through mud puddles, we knew we'd better do it barefoot. No questions asked.

Despite these efforts there'd come a time when the scuffs wouldn't brush out, and no matter what you did with polish and cloth, the old shoes were dog-eared and worn---- and everyone could see it. People would just glance at your shoes and know your economic status.

So when someone sends me four dollars as a donation toward our government of the people, for the people, and by the people --- I know it's because they didn't have five to send, and I know how much that four dollars meant. When I get donations like that, I always stop and think real hard about those who sent it and why what we are doing matters.

Having been poor, even very poor, gives you many insights into people and circumstances. It gives you strength and sympathy and knowledge that you wouldn't have any other way, so it's not a bad thing. It's a good thing. You emerge from it knowing that you can survive poverty, and what it takes to do so. Poverty doesn't scare you, because you've already been there and done that.

And yet, poverty is always there in the background, like a song you recognize.

Nobody needs to tell you what it means when "Food for the Poor" sends you a set of free Christmas cards made of banana bark in the middle of August.

Clearly, times are hard for them, very hard, or they'd never do such a thing.

This wonderful organization provides food and care for the poorest of the poor among our neighbors in Haiti and throughout the Caribbean. They translate rice and beans and local-grown vegetables into a future for those who have nothing and nobody else to help.

Through various work and farm development efforts, they help families and entire communities. But most of all, they provide food for the poor.

While 98% of the foreign aid appropriated by the corporate honchos in Washington, DC, never makes it to those it was purportedly intended to help, 96% of what you give to Food for the Poor hits the mark, day after day and year after year.

For those who have never seen or received a banana bark card, let me fill you in. These are small, exquisite, handmade little works of art. They are printed in sepia tone, shades of brown, using only one color of ink on cream colored paper. The printing establishes the scene, and then, carefully, pieces of banana bark (which sheds naturally each year from the trees) is cut and shaped and glued in place to add a star, an angel's robe, or a shepherd's mantle.

Unlike many organizations that barrage you with heart-rending stories, Food for the Poor sends you the cards, and let's them speak for themselves.

And if you have ever been poor yourself, you recognize it when people are making use of what little they have to add some good to the world. Nobody has to tell you.

I was startled, frankly, to get the annual banana bark Christmas card promotion in August and I didn't have to think too hard about why it came more than two months early. Times are hard. People are scared. People are unemployed. Donations are down. Kids are going hungry, so Food for the Poor is sending its greetings early.

Yes, I know, I am supposed to be fundraising in support of our actual government and all the needs that we have as we work to fully restore it--- and Lord knows, the needs here never stop, either. Lord knows that times are tough and getting tougher all over, thanks to the failures and corruption of corporate government.

Still, I had to stop and had to tell you. When the snow is deep and I make the trek to the Post Office to send my few Christmas cards, they are going to be small little things made out of plain paper, one color of ink, and banana bark. They will have wise men and angels and shepherds in their fields--- and a little bit of the True Magic of Christmas tucked inside.

You can get yours by contacting Food for the Poor at: 6401 Lyons Road, Coconut Creek, Florida 33073, 800-487-1158, www.FoodForThePoor.org.

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