

Guest Post by Barbie Rodriguez:

Ah, it's here again. The season of joy and hope, peace and love. And of people being frazzled, short of time and money, stressing over finding just the "right" present for that most special person in their life. Commercial bombarding has started too: "Show them you really care, buy them a (fill in item of your choice here)." And it got me to thinking:

I recently spent a Saturday afternoon with a dear friend who I think of as my Fairy Godmother. This is someone who came into my life at a particularly bumpy time and, not knowing me from Adam, took me under her wing, made me feel loved, cared about and safe. Someone who, on my second night in my new apartment, showed up on my doorstep with the sleighbed of my dreams and a friend to help her assemble it. I sleep in that bed every night and every night I am thankful for it and for her friendship. Through the years she has consistently surprised me with little acts of kindness, sometimes out of the blue and always when most needed. She has encouraged me when my spirit has faltered, told me to get off my duff when I've been whiny and has been there for me through thick and thin. We hadn't seen each other for some months, something always coming up, making us reschedule. But this past weekend our agendas coincided and we spent an afternoon watching movies, talking and noshing. We have the most wonderful talks. When saying our good-byes, she gave me one of her healing hugs and thanked me for a lovely day. She had come bearing a present of lunch and Jamaican patties to enjoy later. I must confess, I always have a hankering for Jamaican patties; I told her I would have the patties for breakfast the next morning.

Sunday morning dawned. I got up, made my café con leche, zapped the patties in the microwave and sat down to munch. I thought back on all the holiday seasons spent with my loved ones no longer here, but watching from Heaven (of this I am sure); of time spent with my friemily (each of whom I am thankful for, people who started out as strangers, became friends and then family, hence the term); of holiday seasons when we had little money, yet my parents always managed to get the most fabulous Christmas trees ever and attend Midnight Mass in spiffy new outfits; of time spent sharing, sometimes laughing, sometimes crying; sometimes doing both at once, a trait which I believe is uniquely human. And I then realized, of all the wonderful presents received throughout my life, the most special one has been time. Just time. Time spent with those I love. And for that time, time taken from busy

schedules, time taken from other pursuits, time spent making memories that no one and nothing can ever take away, it is for that time, and for those sharing it with me, I was, am, and always will be, most thankful.

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