

A surprise package from a friend

Is there anything more exciting than a package that arrives in the mail?

I don't mean a package of grocery items that you've ordered for yourself. I mean a special, unexpected package from a friend.

A few weeks ago our friend Annie traveled to Israel to visit family there. Her airplane landed there on Palm Sunday, and she even texted me from the airport to tell me she was there.

Before Annie left, she had asked what she could bring back for us. I probably should have said, "You don't need to bring a thing," but what I actually said was something like, "You'll know it when you see it." That's the kind of friendship I have with Annie.

But I knew she would find the perfect something for me—for my family—and, of course, she did.

One evening this week when I came home from work, a package was sitting on our dining room table. Somehow, almost miraculously in this house, no one had opened it. Our boys love to tear into the packages that arrive, but they didn't know that this one had anything to do with them, so they let it be.

I recognized it immediately, though. Annie's name was on the return address. I couldn't wait to open it.

Inside I found:

- two sandalwood rosaries
- two Ravens shirts with "Ravens" written in Hebrew
- a set of holy water, oil, soil, and incense from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem
- a Bazooka joke in Hebrew
- a note from Annie

As our boys buzzed with excitement about the shirts and the rosaries and those cool little bottles, I thought of what a thoughtful and beautiful gift Annie had put together

for us. Annie is Jewish, but she went out of her way to find things in Jerusalem's Old City that would be meaningful to our Catholic family.

And she succeeded.

Sometimes people talk about the gift of time or the gift of sharing a talent or a memory, and those have wonderful meaning. But I do love a tangible object to evoke a memory or remind you of a person. Every time we look at those bottles or use the rosaries or wear the shirts, we will think of Annie. She traveled all the way to Israel during the holiest time of the year and picked these items out just for us. That's so special.