

Weekly Wisdom  
~Stephen Sarchet

Maggie waits patiently for her turn to place the few groceries she has chosen for their dinner, trying hard not to acknowledge the sideways glances of those around her. Their awkward smiles and furtive looks, the meaningful whispers between friends at the sight of her little boy are all too common, sometimes too mean, but mostly just tiring in their regularity. She hardly sees the young man in the apron standing behind the register, focusing instead on her son as he eagerly steps up for his turn.

*The greatness of humanity is not in being human, but in being humane.*  
~Mahatma Gandhi

“Hello mister! We got all this stuff for dinner tonight and I’m buyin’ it for my Momma!” he announced unabashedly. The young man in the apron crouched slightly so the two of them were nearly the same height and replied, “That’s awesome! Your Momma is really lucky to have you to buy dinner for her!” as a

smile broke like a wave across the little boy’s face. In that same instant the young man’s eyes met the young mother’s and he gave a slight nod to her saying, “Well then, let’s see what the damage is! Your little man must really take good care of you.”

In that instant, in that golden moment, all the sideways glances and mean-spirited whispers melted away under the light of grace as warm and soft as her son’s sleeping breath. Glancing at the tag on his chest, she whispered “Thank you, Richard” to the young man in the apron as he counted the change and deposited the shining copper and silver coins in her son’s small hand. Such a simple thing, a non-thing really that transpires between people all the time, which meant so much to a young mother and her son.

Grace seems such a rarity. Dignity seems so unexpected, so surprising to us when it rises up among us. But both go with us wherever we are waiting to be given, received, witnessed. They are both our gift and our strength which we give and receive from each other. They point out our humanity to us. With grace we are able to acknowledge our moments of weakness or vulnerability. Our sometimes less than perfect selves. Dignity lifts us up and holds us up to each other. It gives us hope when we see it in others and fortifies us when we see it on ourselves.

*Dignity does not ride in on high-spirited steeds demanding to be honored. It stands up quietly, resolutely in spite of the weight upon its shoulders for anyone and no one to see.*