

This may be season of giving ... but let's not forget it's also the season of saying thank you. One of the loveliest ways of expressing gratitude is being sidelined by the convenience of email. In fact I think we can all say that sending a hand written note is the most sincere form of saying thanks.

## Something to be Thankful for - Boon and Boonarama

A boon is something to be thankful for, a blessing, or benefit. It may be received in the form of a gift or as something that is asked for or a favor that is sought. In olden times, it refers to a favor given by the nobility to one of a lower status. The member of the nobility or a noble person would grant a boon or gift to another person of lower rank.



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This gift giving or granting of a gift or boon lead to a curious saying; "the quality of mercy is unstrained." It means that if you are giving a gift or doing someone a favor then it makes great sense to do so in a way that is not dramatic or strained. It was originally spoken by Portia, in "The Merchant of Venice", written by William Shakespeare in 1596.

Shakespeare actually wrote:

*"The quality of mercy is unstrained;*

*It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven;*

*Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;*

*It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;*

*"Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes;*

*The throned monarch better than his crown;"*



A note of thanks should be written for gifts of all kinds including holiday, wedding, birthday, shower, and birth. Hospitality, dinners, or parties should also be acknowledged.

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What Shakespeare was writing about was the concept of mercy being a good thing. Over time this came to be taken for granted and the term of a 'quality' example of 'mercy' came into being. Giving a gift that requires a return gift or some future obligation makes the gift giving of a strained nature. When giving boons or granting boons became a popular obligation of the nobility, the granting of them in an unstrained manner makes the person granting the boon nobler than their position or title. The problem with this is that in a Monarchy, your Count votes, while in a Democracy, your vote counts.

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This concept of mercy being unstrained was somewhat undermined by the idea of 'Noblesse Oblige'. "Noblesse oblige" is generally used to imply that with wealth, power, and prestige come social responsibilities. The granting of mercy or boons was considered an obligation of the better off people in society. The term has also been applied to those who are capable of simple acts to help one who is less fortunate.

As an example in the US Marines officers are issued a book called, "The Marine Officer's Guide", where it states that, "As an officer, you demand a great deal of your men. But they in fact demand much more of you. If you let down one of your Marines, you are letting down the entire Corps. Noblesse oblige is the private motto of every officer of Marines."

The granting of mercy or helping those of us who are less fortunate is becoming the territory of our elected officials. Many of whom would not know what you are talking about when you ask them about a

favor or a boon. One of the advantages in a democracy is that if you were to ask one person how much a telephone book weighs, you may get anything from 2 ounces or 56.7 grams to 20 lbs. or 9.07 Kilograms. But if you ask 2000 people you will get an average answer very close to the exact weight.

However when electing public officials or politicians it is useful to note that the weight of a telephone book does not change until the next year, but the public official or politician will change sometimes daily. So predicting whether you will get and accurate judge of a politician when you vote may be more difficult than getting the accurate judge of the weight of a phone book.

The good news is that there is a solution and here is a gift for you. If you can convince the voting regulatory board in your jurisdiction to change the voting regulations, you should be able to get better candidates to run and better more merciful people to be elected. The change is really quite simple. Instead of every

eligible voter getting one vote, they would, after the change, get 3 votes. In order for their vote to count, they would have to indicate who they want to finish in first place, who in second place and who in third place.

The person or candidate who gets the first place vote gets 2 points. The person who gets the second place vote gets 1 point and the person who gets the third place vote will get zero points. The person with the most points after the election wins. The interesting thing about this concept, first proposed by a French Mathematician in 1776, is that the candidate with the most second place votes will normally win the election. This means that he or she may not be some of the voter's most popular person, but they will be all of the voter's second place choice. It doesn't take away peoples right to vote, but it does take a way their right to vote without thinking.

As soon as potential candidates realize this they will come out of the woodwork and start running as candidates and then you can see who will be the most merciful and best at granting boons and thus is most deserving of your vote.

