

**What
can
you
bring?**

Assembly B: What's the strangest present you've ever received?

I read this on the internet. Someone wrote: 'The strangest gift I ever received was when I was 6 years old and I got a car windshield.'

What about you? Let's hear about some strange presents?

[PowerPoint slide 1]

Today I want to talk to you about some women in Africa who gave a rather unusual gift to the people in their village.

First of all I want to set the scene. **[PowerPoint slide 2: African landscape]**

What is Africa famous for? [Mention various animals, World Cup 2010 in South Africa, famine, etc.]

Those are all good answers.

Some people think Africa is country, but this is wrong. Does anyone know why?

That's right, it's a continent, like Europe is a continent.

Europe contains 47 countries. Africa contains 57. And the countries in Africa are mostly a lot larger than the countries in Europe. In fact, Africa is three times larger than Europe.

Today we're travelling to a country on the east coast of Africa called Tanzania. It is famous for Mount Kilimanjaro, which is the tallest mountain in Africa, and the Serengeti National Park, which is popular with tourists who go to see zebras, lions, leopards, elephants, rhinoceros and buffalo. Speaking of animals, this brings us back to our strangest ever gift.

You might have been given a dog or a cat or a hamster as a present – but has anyone been given a cow?!

Well, this is what happened in a village called Sayuni, in Tanzania.

[PowerPoint slide 3: Tanzanian village]

But, in Sayuni, the gift was not so strange, but most of the people there grow and make their own food by farming small plots of land or by keeping cows, goats, pigs and chickens.

The cow was a gift to the village from a community of nuns. **[PowerPoint slide 4: Sisters with a cow]**

Nuns are also called Sisters. Does anyone know what a nun is?

Nuns are women who live together and make special vows to spend their lives praying to God, thanking God for his goodness, and helping people in any way they can.

We have nuns in England. They tend to wear black and white uniforms, not blue and white ones like the Sisters of St Mary.

Now, what else do nuns do? In Africa, some of them do this...! **[PowerPoint slide 5: Sister on a tractor]**

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What is she doing?! The Sisters of St Mary live together in a convent and have a farm on which they grow their own food. In fact, they are experts so they help local villagers by teaching them better ways of farming.

And they also do this... **[PowerPoint slide 6: Sister in school]** They teach in schools.

[PowerPoint slide 7: Sister with a sewing machine] They make their own clothes and make school uniforms for children who can't afford them.

[PowerPoint slide 8: Sister feeding chickens] They keep animals, for food and to share with their neighbours.

[PowerPoint slide 9: Sister weighing babies] They also run medical centres for mums and babies. They do all these things because they want to help their local community.

So what about that cow?! The cow was a Harvest gift to the local church. Harvest is a time of the year when farmers reap the crops they have grown **[PowerPoint slide 10: Harvest in Tanzania]**, including vegetables – delicious potatoes and carrots and green beans – yum yum! Many churches hold Harvest services. In the old days, people would bring fruit and vegetables they had grown in their gardens. They'd collect the fruit and vegetables at the front of the church. Then after the service they'd give them away to people who were hungry – perhaps people who were poor.

Today, because not many people grow their own food, people bring tins of vegetables and other things like biscuits.

So you can see how in Tanzania it is perhaps not so strange that the nuns brought a cow. The church could make good use of the cow. It gives milk and is helpful on the farm. Even cow manure is useful. Does anyone know what fertilizer is? Cow manure is a type of fertilizer – you spread it on the ground and it puts nutrients into the soil which help vegetables and other crops to grow.

The Sisters of St Mary gave a cow at Harvest. It was their way of saying thank you to God for all the good things that they had. And it was a way of helping other people. What are you thankful for? Let's name some of the good things in our lives?

And how can we show our thanks to God? One way is to simply say thank you to God – we do that by praying. **[Could explain more about prayer at this point.]**

Another way to thank God is by being kind to people around us – like the Sisters of St Mary. For example, by sharing. Perhaps sharing time on your computer games with your sisters and brothers, or helping your mum with tidying the house. These are always ways of saying thank you.