

Loving God Loving Each Other

Question, How many Christian friends do I have? Perhaps a better question is How many Christian friends do I need?

He almost didn't see the lady stranded along the side of the road. Even in the dimming light he could see that she needed help. He pulled in front of her Mercedes and got out. His old Pontiac was still sputtering as he walked toward her car.

Even with the smile on his face she was worried as she saw him approach. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look very safe, he looked poor and hungry.

He could see that she was frightened as he approached the car. He said, "I'm here to help you ma'am. Why don't you get back in the car where it's warm? By the way, my name is Bryan.

All she had was a flat tire, but for an elderly lady that was bad enough. Bryan got the spare and changed the tire. In the dark he banged his knuckles a few times trying to get the jack in the correct location. As he was working, she rolled down the window and they talked. She told him about the trip that she was taking. She couldn't thank him enough for helping her, being stranded was not fun. As Bryan was finishing up she asked how much

she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with her. She could imagine the awful things that might have happened had Bryan not stopped.

To Bryan this was not a job it was helping someone in need. God knows there had been many people who had given him a hand. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way.

He told her that the next time she saw someone in need, she should help that person and think of him. He told her, that would be payment enough. He watched as she started her car and drove off. It had been a depressing day, but he felt good as he watched her tail lights disappear into the night.

A few miles down the road the lady saw a café. It certainly wasn't much to look at from the outside. Gas pumps that hadn't worked for years and the neon sign was half burned out. She decided to stop anyway; a hot cup of soup sounded really good, something to take away the chill from standing out in the rain for over an hour.

The inside of the café wasn't much better than the outside. The pay phone was out of order and it was obvious that the cash register didn't ring very often. The waitress brought a clean towel for her to dry her hair. In spite of being on her feet all day, she had a sweet smile. The lady couldn't help but notice that she was very---very pregnant. The lady was amazed at

how someone with so little was so kind to a complete stranger. She remembered Bryan.

When she finished eating she gave the waitress a one hundred dollar bill to pay for the meal, and as the waitress went to get change she slipped out the door. When the waitress returned she found a note on a napkin and four more one hundred dollar bills. The note said, “ You don’t owe me anything, I have been there too. Somebody nice helped me out. If you really want to pay me back don’t let this chain of love end with you.”

That night when she got home, she couldn’t help but think of the money and the note the lady had written. How could the lady have possibly known the need she and her husband had? The baby was due next month and it was going to be hard, they were just barely making it now.

She knew how worried her husband was. She climbed into bed and gave him a tender kiss and whispered, “Everything’s gonna be all right, I love you, Bryan.”

This is not an original story, in fact the story was made into a song called “The Chain of Love”. Clay Walker recorded it. I do not know the origin of the story, if it was based on fact or not. I do know that it speaks to me about what it means to love my neighbor as myself, and if I read today’s Gospel text correctly, loving my neighbor is directly tied to loving God. The

scribe doesn't ask for the greatest commandments, he asks for the greatest commandment.

In 1st John 4:20 John writes, "Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen." I really think this is why Jesus ties these two scripture verses together. They are connected, they reflect God working within our lives.

Today as we remember the saints, I hope that we can reflect on how love flowed from them to their neighbors, family and friends. Let us resolve within our hearts to draw even closer to God. To love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and to allow that love to flow from us to our neighbors, family and friends.

As Christians we live in community. A community unlike any other. In community we love and care for each other. We come together as one body, the body of Christ. And together we practice loving God and loving each other. Amen