

Kindly Cruel

On Saturday afternoon, I had a graveside funeral in Lakeshore. Later that afternoon, a wedding was scheduled at Our Lady of the Gulf Church..

Earlier that morning, the wedding party had roped off our parking area. They wanted to make sure that none of the “Cruisin’ the Coast” enthusiasts parked in it. Anticipating a large wedding, they manned both entrances to keep out unwanted intruders.

At the graveside, a gentle rain became more persistent as people tried to tiptoe through the already soggy ground. I got in my car and returned to the rectory. By this time, the wedding had begun.

The rectory has three covered parking bays in the back. They all have pillars to separate one from the others. I usually park my car in the middle one. When I arrived, I noticed that all three parking spaces were taken. As the gentle rain continued, my thoughts were not so gentle.

One of the cars was an SUV with North Carolina license plates; another was a Buick with Louisiana license plates and the third had a personal license plate from Harrison County.

I weighed my options and my devilish mind came up with a plan. I decided to park my car outside the cars thereby blocking off one and a half of the parking bays. I went inside the residence part of the rectory and made myself a cup of tea and had some homemade cookies. In the meantime, my mind began to work on various scenarios.

Should I wait until everyone had departed from the wedding, including the bride and groom after their picture-taking? That way, the owners of the said automobiles would have to wait until all were gone to the reception. Then I could ramble out casually and ask them what might be the problem. Of course, they would tell me that some idiot parked his car behind theirs and they couldn’t get out to get to the wedding reception. Then, I could let them in on my plot as I would ask each one: “If I went to a party on your street in North Carolina, Louisiana or Harrison County and parked in your driveway behind your car, would you be a happy camper?” I suspect I would know their answer. That plan seemed too easy.

I stayed in my office watching the people stream out from the wedding. On purpose, I stayed there until almost everyone had left the church. Then, I went to the residence part of the rectory and I saw people pacing to and fro in the carport. Obviously, they were panicking and, secretly, I was not about to relieve their anxiety.

I stood inside the window viewing the developments as they unfolded. People waited until the occupants of the Harrison County car arrived and they were able to reverse out because my car was not blocking them. Then the obstacle course driving experience began. The person who owned the car in the center spot – my spot could not exit because my car was blocking him. He began to inch forward and backwards several times trying to find the right angle to get out through the far parking spot which was now vacant. After several attempts and some help from bystanders, he finally exited.

Now there was only one left occupying our carport. It was the SUV from North Carolina. A young woman, in her mid-twenties – I presumed – was driving. She reversed back and forward several times, trying to steer her vehicle so that it might inch out between the pillars into freedom. Her guide, a young gentleman, gave her directions, making sure she did not hit my strategically parked car. She finally did it. She exchanged a few words of appreciation to the young gentleman, gave a thumbs-up to him and drove out of the parking lot and off to the wedding reception.

I enjoyed watching the experience from behind the shutters. Secretly, I was glad that I didn’t go out, as earlier planned, and confront the illegal parkers. Instead, I had more fun by just watching and not saying a word. I got more than a chuckle from the experience. I got satisfaction.

It made me wonder if God often gets a chuckle or even a good laugh from us when we get into some stupid and embarrassing situations as he watches us try and extricate ourselves. Then, I realized that some times cruelty can have its own rewards and kindnesses.