

Breaking up

The doorbell rang at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday evening. A parishioner stood outside. As soon as I opened the door, she said, "There is a young man in church and he is in a bad state. I think you need to come and talk with him."

I consented and headed out to church. I noticed an old bike standing up against the railings of the church. Some parishioners were leaving following a regular novena. I noticed him sitting in a pew in the middle of the church. Two ladies who attended the novena stood by him as he sat in the pew.

I arrived, motioned to them to lock the church and leave and I would take care of things. The young man, of slight build, appeared to be in his late twenties. He wore a green T-Shirt and a pair of blue jeans. His cap sat on the pew beside him.

I positioned myself in the pew next to him and introduced myself. He seemed very agitated and nervous and his hands moved constantly from rubbing his pants knees and then to rubbing his face with an air of desperation.

Finally he began to talk. As I listened, I tried to put together part of his story. Presently, he lived in Gulfport and had ridden his bicycle to Bay St. Louis earlier in the day. I found out that Bay St. Louis had certain memories for him. It was here that he entertained his friends on one of the beaches when they came to see him. Originally from Michigan, he moved to the Coast, three years ago. Originally, he came with some family to sell Christmas Trees and fell in love with the area. He decided to come back and make his visit more permanent.

He invited his girlfriend from Michigan to come and live with him. By now, they were living together for three years. "Would you like to see her picture?" he asked. I consented. He pulled out his Nokia cell phone and showed me her picture." As he showed me her picture, tears began to flow down his cheeks.

Pieces of his troubled story began to fit. He just broke up with his girlfriend. It was not his decision; it was her decision. He was distraught. "I thought we had something really special going for us. We were tuned into each other. In fact, I was about to ask her to marry me when all this happened. Now, I am totally devastated."

Compounding his situation was the fact that the power company had turned off his electricity in his trailer and he was also out of work.

His story continued amid his nervousness. He went with a friend to a bar and had a few beers. They kept to themselves in the bar. A young woman, as she was leaving the bar, turned and handed him her phone number on a piece of paper. His girlfriend found out about the phone number and decided to sever the relationship. He claimed he did not call the girl who gave him the phone number and tore up the paper.

He tried to talk to his girlfriend and explain but she was not willing to listen. He wrote her a letter later on and asked a friend to give it to her. The friend did. He asked her if she got it and read it. She indicated that she got it but tore it up without reading it.

What am I going to do now? I can't live without her. She is my life, my whole future," he blurted out.

When he had finished his story, I tried to help him see the big picture and show him that both of them were hurting and that, individually, they needed to heal by sorting out and understanding their feelings, expectations and even misinformation they were experiencing. Both needed time to heal as individuals before they found out if there was any possible future in the relationship.

As I tried to put the pieces together for him, he began to calm down and be more open. Finally, an hour later, he was ready to leave. As he was leaving he said, "I hope I don't meet any of those guys in blue on my ride back to Gulfport." With that, he left as we shook hands.

As I thought about the encounter later, my mind kept dwelling on the words of that old song, "Breaking up is hard to do." The chorus haunted me: "They say that breaking up is hard to do Now, I know, I know that it's true. Don't say that this is the end. Instead of breaking up I wish that we were making up again."