

Traveling Companion: Gone Fishing!

Fr. Michael Tracey

As I peddled my bike along the seawall, I noticed them with their white bait buckets and tackle boxes. They sat on the seawall with feet dangling in the direction of the rustling waves that beat upon the shore. Their wrist action let me know they were seasoned at the craft. Their patience was obvious and they were oblivious to the mad rush of cars and trucks that sped past, immune to the speed limit.

Then, it happened. I noticed one gentleman, large-framed in the distance, applying his craft. His broad back shielded me from really getting a glimpse of his condiments for the trip. As I peddled closer, I heard him talk and then I found out why. A little girl, about three or four years old, sat on his right, cuddled up close to him. His chatter was anything but adult. His voice had an air of excitement and involvement and he shared his rod and reel with his little charge. Two hands, one strong and sinewy, dwarfed a tiny, child's hand as they both held on to the rod and reel.

As I passed by, I noticed they were about to pull in a fish as it danced ferociously in the waves, trying to unhook itself. The little girl's eyes danced with excitement and her body language complimented her adventure ride. The excitement of both grandfather and granddaughter was peppered with voice inflections and deflections that only two fishing buddies could understand, no matter what their age.

I was tempted to stop and just observe some more but decided not to. I didn't want to disturb the harmony, excitement, relationship and discovery that existed between the two of them. Instead, I peddled on, savoring the priceless snapshot of life that I just noticed.

About fifteen minutes later, I was making my return trip toward home. Now, the couple had packed up their fishing gear and were ready to head home. The grandfather had put away all the fishing gear and prize catches in the back of his blue Ford truck. He was walking the little girl around the back of the truck, holding her hand, shielding her from the constant flowing traffic and putting her into the passenger side of his truck. The little girl walked with a step of excitement and an air of accomplishment.

I could only try to imagine the non-verbals in that truck on the way home. I tried to envision the impact of that prized, fishing relationship and, more especially, that wonderful bonding between grandfather and granddaughter. I tried to think about that little girl, when she got home, how she might share her fishing experience with her excited parents. I also wondered how that fishing expedition might play out or become foundational in that little girl's self-image and life as she would grow up.

I peddled on, pushed on by the gentle breeze on my back, but more conscious of the gifted snapshot of life I had just encountered along the way. The setting sun warned me of its nightcap but my memory still remained flooded with the simple encounter with two strangers, two fishing buddies, bonded for life. Yes, their picture was worth more than a thousand words because it captured a God moment that reminded me that love was still possible; that hope was inevitable and that people still can have faith in each other, even beyond any age barrier.

I realized that the Lord had his reasons and that he still wanted to show us all that, not only have children a special place in the hearts of adults but, more especially in the heart of God. Finally, I realized that God still goes fishing.