

You never know

Any two days are never the same in a priest's life. You meet people from all walks of life, from all kinds of backgrounds, experiences and struggles. You meet people wrestling with doubts as well as people full of the Spirit. You meet people who are celebrating an achievement, a new arrival or an engagement. You meet people who question the cross they have to carry, wondering why and if they have the strength to carry it. It is all unpredictable; often unrehearsed; seldom boring; often challenging; seldom wanting.

Of late, I have been noticing the more "unpredictable and often refreshing" encounters in my day to day life as a priest.

Recently, a tall, bespectacled gentleman walked into my office. He sat down and said, "Can I talk to you, Sir." When I heard the "Sir" part, my curiosity peaked. I sensed an ulterior motive. He began his story. He had moved into a retirement facility in the area but he was in a bind. He needed \$400 dollars to pay his utilities. I told him about St. Vincent DePaul and when they would be meeting again. Out of curiosity, I asked him what church he belonged to. He mentioned that he was a non-denominational Christian. Curiously, he mentioned that he had attended a Catholic church the past weekend and that he probably would attend a non-denomination service on Wednesday evening.

Before he left, he popped an unusual question. "Sir, have you been saved?" I told him that I had. Then he asked, "When were you saved?" I told him when I was a little boy. That seemed to satisfy him and he commented, "You are a good Christian man."

As he left, I could hear him muttering to himself as he walked down the corridor. I wondered was he cursing me out for not helping him or praising the Lord because he had met someone else who was also saved.

A week later, in the evening, he walked into my office again, unannounced. He shook my hand and, standing at my desk, he popped the question, "Do you know any woman in your congregation who might be interested in getting married?" I said I didn't. But I told him that there may be several eligible women in the retirement complex where he lived who might be interested in marriage. "Why don't you sit down with some of them and get to know them, you might find someone who might be interested in marriage." "I think I may do that," he said. I also let him know that I was not in the matchmaking business.

He left, walking down the corridor, muttering some words to himself as he walked out the door. I wondered if he will return any time soon with a bride to be in tow asking me to perform a wedding ceremony. But, then again, at the rate this gentleman is moving, I would not be surprised.

On Sunday at our 10:30 a.m. Mass, I noticed his arrival just before the final prayer. He was dressed in a light tan suit and matching tie. He stood in the back pew. I noticed he was alone and had a black covered bible in his hand. He had arrived a little too late to encounter any eligible women. Sadly, he left alone as he shook hands with me.

The encounters peaked my interest. Maybe, I should start a matchmaking business for older persons who have also been saved. I notice that there are lots of fee-based, dating services on the web even some specifically geared toward Catholics and Christians. They all seem to focus on the younger generation. I have not heard of any web site that caters for older persons. Maybe I should explore it some more. I could call it "Seniors Serenade." It's motto could be "No more Senior Moments; only Senior Bliss."

I remember one time performing the wedding ceremony for an older couple. Both had been married before and their respective spouses had died. Some time later, they had met each other and fallen in love. On their wedding day, I noticed the bride-to-be chatting with her husband-to-be before the ceremony. Humorously, I mentioned to her that it was bad luck to see the groom before the wedding ceremony. Jokingly, she said, "At our age, who cares. We may not have a whole lot of time together to enjoy each other so I'll take the bad luck and enjoy him even before we tie the knot."

By the way, I will not be surprised if one day in the not too distant future, a tall, bespectacled gentleman walks into my office with a women in tow. His first words may be, "I have found a woman who will marry me, will you perform the ceremony?"