

Maybe, God doesn't want me to...

Petite and probably in her late twenties, she arrived at my office unannounced on Tuesday afternoon. Her face seemed familiar. Then, I remembered I had seen her as a cashier at one of the local lumber companies.

Trying to engage in conversation initially resembled trying to pull weeds and their roots from concrete. Eventually, it got better.

I initiated the conversation by asking her if she had been here to see me before. She indicated that she came to see me several years ago. I had remembered that occasion.

After a series of small chatter about what she was doing and what had happened to her since we last met, she opened up and told me that she had worked at the local lumber company but that the company went out of business and she lost her job. During her work experience at the lumber company she went to school and had graduated with a nursing degree as well as a degree in psychology. She also got married.

Finally, the bombshell dropped. She told me that she had been working at a nursing home for six weeks and was fired before she walked in to see me. She explained the circumstances. She had helped an elderly gentleman to the bathroom; told him to press the call button when he was finished and she would return to help him to his bed. In the meantime, he fell in the bathroom. The supervisor fired her on the spot for leaving the man unattended. She said, "I didn't know that I had to stay with him."

Fearing that she might be expecting me to come up with another similar job for her, I started to ask some more questions. Why did she get into nursing and get a degree in psychology as well?

Then, she gave me a glimpse into her past. She said that, as a child, she was raped and that really traumatized her. She wanted to be able to work with people and understand them better. She felt drawn to working with older people so she chose nursing as a career. She indicated that she and her husband had recently bought a house and it was imperative that she get a job in order to meet the mortgage payments.

I tried to find out some more about her work experience and what other kinds of jobs she might be interested in applying for. She felt she could not apply to any other nursing home for a job because of the incident that led to her firing from a previous job.

As she sat there with her head down, she eventually said, "Maybe God doesn't want me to do this kind of work?" She was referring to nursing. I could see where this might be leading as her face was filled with discouragement.

I told her that one could look at her statement in different ways. I indicated that some times, we learn some of life's greatest lessons through failures. I mentioned Abraham Lincoln who was beset with several failures on his journey to represent his people and eventually become President of the United States.

I also mentioned to her that she faced a very traumatic event in her own past – the rape. Yet, she turned a devastating experience into a desire to help people who are vulnerable.

I took the young woman's phone number and told her that I would let her know if I found out any job opportunities that might be available to her.

The next morning at Mass, our first reading was from the Acts of the Apostles and related the story of how, following their arrest, imprisonment and subsequent release, the Apostles continued to preach about the Risen Lord with courage and determination.

Now, I wait to see what will happen to the unemployed young woman and whether or not she will still question if God wants her to use her gifts in a nursing environment or if she will recommit herself with courage and perseverance to rise above a devastating experience to a new awareness of how God might be testing her to see how committed she is in serving him in and through her gifts and talents.