

Traveling Companion: Moonlighting as a Traffic Cop

Fr. Michael Tracey

During the past few months, I have been moonlighting as a traffic cop without pay. I take up my position every weekday morning at 7:30 a.m. and greet the morning traffic. I wear my usual official garb and the trafficking public do not seem to mind. I have not been issued with a traffic citation book nor do I wish to procure one. I sure don't want to make any more enemies, even if I am supposed to be doing my job.

Every school morning, I take up my position on the long, winding roadway that leads to the drop-off area for children at Bay Catholic Elementary School. Usually, I am joined by two teachers and, on occasion, some volunteers. For the next half-hour, I keep the traffic moving as well as keep the parents patience in check. Of course, there are a few parents who try to avoid me and try to sneak past me but they get the message very quickly.

Why do I do this? Well, it is a wonderful opportunity to meet the parents as they drop off their kids and it helps me to connect child with parent and get the big picture. But, most of all, I do it because of the fringe benefits it provides.

I love to see parents drive up and watch their interaction with their child or children as they sent them to school for the day.

I am always touched when fathers drop off their kids and I notice the child reaching over to give a hug or a kiss to their father before they go into school. They usually cap it off by saying, "Daddy, I love you."

I notice one father in particular. He stops the car, gets out, and waits for his two children – a boy and a girl to exit the car. Then, he makes sure they have their school bag and supplies. As the children are about to rush into school, he holds them and kisses them. If they are about to rush off without that kiss, he reminds them of what they may have overlooked, "Don't forget Daddy's kiss." Then he sends them on their way with "have a great day at school."

Then there is the mother who drives up with her two daughters – one is in third grade and the other in kindergarten. It is obvious most days that the kindergartener is not enamored by school. The tears start to flow and she doesn't want to be separated from Mommy. Finally, Mommy has to cajole her and finally usher her into school.

I notice a mother drive up, get out of her car, open the door for her four grade daughter. When the daughter gets out of the car, the mother puts her arms around her and gives her a great big hug and a kiss and sends her with lots of motherly love to class.

Another mother drives up in her suburban with her second grader for school. Sitting inside in a child seat is her other daughter who is about three or four years old. The little one soothes herself with her ever present pacifier in her mouth. In spite of that, she will always shout out through the open window a greeting to me as her sister gets out and goes into school.

Then there is Kira, a second grader who arrives with her aunt who teaches at the school. She always comes up to me and gives me a hug which makes my day. I baptized her months earlier and also gave her First Communion earlier in May.

Some parents, when they drive up, ask if I am moonlighting. I affirm their curiosity. Some even ask if I am trying to supplement my income. Others just expect me to be there.

Today is the last day of school. I will have withdrawal symptoms during the summer because my moonlighting job will come to an end. But, fear not, come September, I will be back on the beat, savoring every moment of it.