

Just another mug shot

Recently our parish did a Parish Pictorial Directory. Through the experience, I realized that I was not the only one who didn't want their mug shot in it but, due to the pressure of position, I had no choice.

I didn't even sign up for a slot to have my picture taken. Instead on a Saturday morning, I slotted myself in before anyone else arrived. Our Pastoral Associate had gone in before me and, on her way to view her poses, she turned back and shouted at me, "Be firm! Be firm!" I knew exactly what she meant and was about to put it into practice.

I entered the room and was told by the lady photographer to stand on the spot marked with a blue tape X, I did. Then, I was told, "Let's have your best pose that your grandmother would be proud of." Silently, I dismissed the comments and manufactured a pose. The camera clicked, the strobe flashed and I was captured.

Then, I was asked to sit on a chair. She placed two boxes on top of each other and draped them with a black cloth and asked me to rest my left arm on it. I obliged and I was shot again. She wanted other poses but, thinking back to the "be firm" challenge, I declined.

I made my way to the viewing room and, on the monitor, saw my three poses. I simply said, "Number One," and exited as quickly as I could escape from any pressure sales.

Relieved that my ordeal was over, I could visit with the families as they arrived to go through their own posing ordeal.

Through the whole experience with the Parish Pictorial Directory, I realized I had something in common with most people. It seems most people enjoy having an individual or family portrait made as much as a visit to the dentist. It may be necessary from time to time, but it is put on the longest finger for the longest time possible. Personally, I would rather be behind the camera than in front of it.

With the proliferation of digital cameras, it would seem that people cannot capture enough photos of family, of gatherings, of places visited in order to document their digital history.

As an infrequent contributor of Face Book, I notice the saturation of personal posted pictures as well as personal postings of individuals diaries of their day to day events and experiences. I wonder if some postings of personal details as well as photos indicate a deep need for social interaction and acceptance in a world that is becoming less friendly and more impersonal.

In recent weeks, some people have come to me and said, "You need to update your picture in Gulf Pine Catholic." I dismissed their suggestion by saying that I am greying gracefully and have quite a few wrinkles to prove it. I assure them that Botox is not an option. Finally, I say to them, "Seeing that you still recognize me from my present mug shot in Gulf Pine Catholic, I must have some resemblance to how I look today."

The other day, I was very happy when I passed someone on the street and, as I was passing them, they said, "I recognize you from your picture." I was thrilled that they were referencing Gulf Pine Catholic and not a poster of the Most Wanted at the Post Office.

Now that I have received my most recent colorful mug shot, I have to decide if I will splurge on a cheap 8" X 10" frame and display it with the pictures in my office with some of my friends or if I should heed the prompting of some of my readers.

Then again, I never dreamt that something I started back in 1976 would have woven itself through my life and the paths of so many people who interacted with me and their God over the years.

Maybe, as long as my mug shot stays on page five of Gulf Pine Catholic and people still recognize me, I may stay with it. Like an old pair of slippers that contours to our contours and feels too comfortable to discard, maybe someone will still stop me on the street and say, "I recognize you from your picture."