

Pass It On

There's an elderly man in the nursing home who comes each day to be with his wife. He holds her hand, talks to her, sometimes gently strokes her hair. She never responds. It's obvious she's not aware of his presence. One day I talked with him and told him he reminded me of the powerful public service ad of a man caring for his wife. "Devotion," the ad says. "Pass it on." When I told him this he said, "She'd do the same for me." And then he went on to talk about the ravages of dementia that had taken away the woman who once was a brilliant mathematician. His pain was obvious. But devotion trumped that. I was glad I took time to notice.

It's easy to notice the obvious miracles like the wonders of my twin grandsons who turned one last month. They almost didn't make it, but prayers of many brought them to life and now they are a delight to many. What a joy it is to nuzzle their soft heads and feel their baby breath as they fall asleep in my arms—it's grandma heaven.

But what about the less obvious every-day miracles? What happens to us and to others when we notice —when we take time not just to "smell the roses" and see God's majesty in the beauties of nature, but when we make a conscious effort to pay attention to the people in our every-day lives?

There's a lady who walks everyday in my neighborhood and brings a bag to collect trash she sees along the way. In her quiet simple way she's improving the community—no bells and whistles, just a small way to say that this place we live is beautiful and important. I know someone else who makes it a practice to make eye contact with and talk to people she sees on her street. She greets them with a "hello" and wishes them a good day. Simple, but it makes a difference. It creates a sense of connectedness.

There are some people who seem almost invisible. They fade into the background of our day -to-day routines. We often forget they are there. But they can have a powerful impact on our lives. There's the cashier in the grocery, for example, who always has a smile for everyone. We never ask how she is feeling or let her know how we always choose her checkout line even if it is longer. Maybe it's time to do that. The police whose job it is to daily risk their lives to keep us safe rarely hear anyone say "thank you." I bet it would make their day if someone did. The bus driver who not only has to negotiate traffic and keep to a schedule while dealing with a group of often impatient people seldom gets a pleasant greeting. What a difference it would make if you gave one. It's so easy— nothing flashy—just recognition. It costs nothing but is priceless.

If we take time to notice the people around us, to appreciate the beauty in them, something truly miraculous happens. The world is a friendlier place. Life is a whole lot less scary. God's glory is evident in the ordinary. As St. Ignatius of Loyola said, we begin "to see God in all things." God's fingerprints are evident in the every day. They've always been there. We just haven't noticed before. We even begin to see God at work in ourselves, to know as psalm 149 says we "are fearfully wonderfully made—wonderful are God's works."

And not surprisingly, as we make a conscious effort to do this, it has a ripple effect and more people begin to do the same. Paying attention—pass it on.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

