

Louis

I wonder how God finally got Louis to pay attention to Him. Not so much the words, it's pretty easy to imagine what they consisted of. Statements like, he needed to get straight with both God and himself, after all time was running out. Louis wasn't a kid anymore. I imagine "Man up Louis, it's time you started serving me ... and others. Oh, and by the way, just because you've known Lynne since you were both 14 years old doesn't mean she's going to wait around forever for you to get your act together."

It's how God got his message across to Louis that interests me. Perhaps it felt like a gentle breeze, a Zephyr if you will, flowing against Louis' cheek. Maybe the message was delivered like a jackhammer's staccato approach to breaking up thick asphalt or one of those old fashioned dental drills, the kind a dentist uses when he's trying to break up decay that's close to the nerve. The drill that succeeds in vibrating every part of your cranial structure. Whatever God did it worked. Louis listened and continued listening until he drew his last breath on this earth.

I got to know Louis when he was waist deep in the service to others period of his commitment to God and family. He was working as a caseworker at our Turning Point Shelter when its director, Margaret Davitt, decided she needed to slow things down a little bit, in her early 80's that seemed like a logical request.

"So Margaret, who do you think should replace you?"

"Jim, I think we should promote Louis. He's a good man. He really cares about our guests. He'll do well."

That was all I needed to hear. I watched Louis draw on his deep faith and strength of character as he mentored his staff and counseled our shelter guests and Maggie's Place residents. He remained even keeled whether he was encouraging our guests to

make better life decisions or accepting the fact that often they were not able to.

When Louis' illness sapped him of the strength required to be the Turning Point's director, he worked at the Common Ground and became my advisor on homeless issues. During our conversations I got to know the man who listened to the voice of God and became a minister, founding, with others, a church. I got to know the man who became reacquainted with the lovely voice of a woman he had known since adolescence, they became husband and wife and cherished life partners. I got to witness and understand the personal strength that enabled him to become an outstanding counselor. While our conversations were mostly secular, i.e. his health, his work, his family, helping homeless people, I strayed from this format during one of our last conversations and asked him if he employed his sense of humor in his conversations with God. He paused, looked at me, gave me the short laugh that emanated from deep in his soul and simply said "Oh yeah."

On Friday morning I was reminded of Louis' faith and devotion at one particular moment during the graduation ceremony for our Women in Green Jobs training program held in our Café: The graduates, one by one, came to the podium and accepted their diploma and a citation from the State Legislators in attendance. As one of the graduates accepted her diploma I noticed a young girl, all dressed up, hair braided, gazing excitedly at her mom from the front row. I called her up, and she became part of this moment. She held her mom's diploma, looking up ecstatically at her mom's face as the cameras clicked.

At that moment I wondered if Louis had the same look on his face when he gazed upon the Divine Countenance.

Rev. Louis E. Miller, Jr., age 68, passed away last week after a long illness. Please take a quiet and personal moment to reflect on Louis' strength of character and his service to others.

Jim Cuddy
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