

Instruments of God's Grace

It was sometime during the school year 2007–2008. It was a normal school day, and I was doing the usual thing—observing the class of a new teacher at La Salle Academy in Providence, Rhode Island. As I sat in the back of a United States history class, I noticed that the young man sitting next to me, a junior, did not have his textbook with him. During the 50-minute class he looked as if he were paying attention but seemed to do nothing but “look.” At the end of class I saw him in the hallway and said to him (I did not know his name) that I expected more of him. And that was the start of a relationship that exists till this day.

During that year he frequently stopped by my office to chat or just to sit. At the end of the year he sent me a copy of an essay he was preparing for college admissions. In that essay he wrote about our budding relationship: “Talking with Brother Fred got me thinking. If his presence in my life meant so much to me, then maybe I can make a difference in other people’s lives.” Later in that essay he wrote about his relationship with God: “I believe that God put me here for a reason, and I want to be an instrument of his peace. Being close to God affects everything I do.” I was moved by the actions of God in this young man’s life and the way in which God used me as an instrument of grace.

However, it was early in his senior year that God’s presence was revealed even more deeply. This now-senior stopped by my office after I had offered morning prayer for the school on the public address system. He remarked that he liked the prayer very much. I thanked him and asked him if he prayed. He said that of course he did. In fact, the night before he had written a prayer. I asked him if he would share the prayer with me. In typical

teenage fashion he ripped a scrap of paper from his notebook, asked for a pencil, and wrote down his prayer. It read: “Let God’s breeze pass through your window and fill your home so that not only you breathe him in, but everyone who enters.” I was deeply moved by the words—so simple and yet so profound. He succinctly captured what it means when we say, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.”

To this day that scrap of paper is under the glass on my desk, to be seen each morning as I bow down to kiss my desk and to remember that God is present—in this office, in each person who enters, in the depths of my own being. Over these years, this young man and his words have been instruments of God’s grace in my life.



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