

Bringing the Light of Hope

By Moe Wosepka, Montana Catholic Conference, June 27, 2013

Deno was a friend, and Deno was a pest. “Pest” is a kind description because, that is not how I or others referred to him most of the time. Deno was a 30 something year old man with a developmental age of about 6 or 8. He needed a lot of attention and was could not wait for an appropriate time.

Deno loved electronics, whether working or not, and it was not unusual to see him walking down the street cradling a discarded stereo with a broken lid, and a toaster or a tape player under his arm. The cords dangled dangerously near his feet, but treasure in hand, and sporting a victorious smile Deno headed home, undaunted by the cords that threatened to trip him at every step.

I met Deno at the Good Samaritan Thrift Store when I was working there. He would show up nearly every Saturday morning after hitting garage sales on the way. His would carry his most recent finds with him but set them aside when he got to the store because the incoming donations held a glitter that he could not refuse.

Deno always wanted to plug things in to “test it”. He had a knack for finding appliances that didn’t work, so he was constantly asking me for help making it work, or finding an extension cord, or moving items off the shelf so he could be close to the electrical outlet. All this while customers arrived, donations showed up at the back door, and assistance clients wanted a few minutes, along with all the other needs of getting the store open and the business day underway. Not to understate the situation, Deno was a pest.

One of those days, when the normal rush was underway and a key employee didn’t show up, we were having problems with the till, the phone was demanding to be answered, and my friend Deno was in need of some help “testing” one of the electrical items he found. I was standing at the front counter and my patience was near the breaking point. The words were already formed when I turned to face him. I would demand he leave the store because I was too busy to deal with him that day. His toothy grin stopped me from saying what was on my mind. He was so excited about his new find that I couldn’t run him off. What came to me at that time was in all the chaos of the day, the most important thing I had to do was to spend a few moments with Deno.

Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, The Preacher of the Pontifical Household, noted in his Homily on Good Friday, that "In Revelation, Jesus says that He stands at the door and knocks (Rev 3:20)". “Sometimes,” he continued, “as noted by our Pope Francis, he does not knock to enter, but knocks from within to go out, to reach out to the existential suburbs of sin, suffering, injustice, religious ignorance and indifference, and of all forms of misery.”

In his installation Mass, Pope Francis urged world leaders to serve, “the poorest, the weakest, the least important,” and further urged them not to allow, “omens of destruction and death to accompany the advances of this world.”

“Today, too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others,” the pope added.

Amid the clatter of each day and the warnings of doom, death and destruction by political operatives and talking heads, we can still find hope in Jesus. In the witness of Pope Francis, and the lesson I learned from Deno, I believe we are called to be the voice of hope. During this Year of Faith perhaps the most important thing we have to do is to set the dire warning aside, refocus on Jesus, and bring the Hope of Christ to the hopeless in our communities.