“Don’t Do It, Brother!”
Homeless Man’s Words Save a Life

John said that he had one foot on the railing of a bridge over the Missouri River. He had hit bottom in his life and was without hope. He was planning to jump.

He was sure he was alone on that bridge when, seemingly out of nowhere, he heard a man say, “Don’t do it, brother.” He turned around and saw what looked, by all appearances, to be a homeless man. He didn’t know where he came from.

He said it was that word, “brother,” that caught his ear. “I hadn’t talked to my brother in some time and something about that word made me stop and reconsider. I have since gone back to that bridge to try to find that man and thank him, but I have never found him.”

John has been living in a homeless shelter and came to our employment program. We helped him find a job as a cook. He stands here proudly holding the sign that will go up on our “wall of fame” of all those whom we help find work.

We never know what effect our words have on another. As St. Paul writes, “Encourage one another and build each other up.” (1 Thes. 5: 11)

What Do You Think the Message Is? A Reflection for Lent

A man recently donated this drawing that you see here. He comes periodically to eat in our community kitchen. I suspect this particular drawing was inspired by his own faith and his own times of need.

I thought it was interesting that the artist drew a homeless person at the foot of the cross. We asked several people at our community kitchen what they thought is the drawing’s message. Here are some of their thoughts. What are yours?

“The homeless need help, the only one who is always there is Christ.” (volunteer)
“Christ ALWAYS looks to the lowly.” (client)
“We are never forsaken.” (volunteer)
“Even when we have nothing, we always have someone watching over us.” (client)
“Christ who was born into poverty lives in poverty even today.” (client)
“No one knows what Christ looked like then; we can find Christ in our neighborhood today.” (employee)
The Dinner Challenge
More Difficult than the Ice Bucket Challenge

The Ice Bucket Challenge to raise money for ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) started in the summer of 2014. The challenge was to videotape yourself having a bucket of ice water poured over you. People donated money to ALS if you did so. It worked. It raised a lot of money for ALS.

In the Gospel of Luke, we read one of the many challenges that Jesus makes. I think it’s more difficult than pouring a bucket of ice over yourself. Let’s call it the “Dinner Challenge.” He challenges people not to invite their friends and family over for dinner. He said, “They might repay you.” Rather, he says, “Invite the poor, the crippled and the lame or those who cannot repay you.”

Tough challenge, as typically, we prefer to share meals with people we like. It’s a great way to bond, to deepen family ties and strengthen friendships. By inviting strangers, poor and disabled ones at that, Jesus’ challenge makes dinner seem more like work and less like fun. But he has his reasons for his challenges.

Since opening One City Café, I’ve seen people who are normally strangers to each other sit down and visit. Judging books by covers, you can see at some tables that the people at it may have little in common. For example, I have seen a Rockhurst University student visit with a homeless man at dinner. Sometimes a hot meal can loosen up a good conversation.

If you’d like to take Jesus up on the “Dinner Challenge,” come by some time and have dinner any weekday night between 4:30 and 6:00. Of course, the “Dinner Challenge” can happen anywhere. We all probably know someone who is impoverished by loneliness or a difficult personality. Invite them to dinner. A good challenge for Lent.

If you would like to volunteer at One City Café, go to our website, www.bishopsullivan.org, and sign up for a day that works for you.

If you would like to sponsor a night, that is, “pick up the tab” for the meal one night ($150) in honor or in memory of someone, you can likewise do that on our website.

Or, if you would simply like to come and eat, we serve dinner every weekday night between 4:30 and 6:00.