

# 31 Days of the Little Way: Witnessing a Moment of Affection

I was almost-but-not-quite-late to my annual dermatologist appointment, and I was signing in at the desk when I realized there was a couple standing behind me.

As I turned to sit down, I saw that they were both a bit stooped, maybe in their early 80s. But it wasn't their age that struck me. It was how loving they were toward each other. The woman was dropping the man off for his appointment, but she made sure he was comfortable in a chair, and she leaned down to give him a kiss before she left. The entire exchange, brief as it was, was beautiful and loving.

Then she walked out the door, and he settled into his chair, reading a magazine.

It was then that I realized that a radio talk show was being broadcast in the waiting area. The question under discussion was "Who annoys you more, your spouse or your kids?"

I sat there wondering who asks that question and who answers it. As people called the show's hosts, I struggled to see something positive in the conversations. Could it be helpful for people to realize that marriage and parenting isn't perfect, but it's still a long-term commitment? Were these people sharing and speaking with love?



I decided to assume they were. I try to remember that, as my older son reminds me so often, everyone is different. How I would approach that conversation—turning off the radio and running like crazy the other way—is not how everyone would. It seemed to be a good-natured discussion, but I wasn't finding it very...affirming.

So I half-tuned out the show, while thinking how fortunate I was that I had witnessed that poignant yet ordinary everyday moment of affection.

Then suddenly the woman I had seen was back. Her husband had forgotten a tube of cream he needed to show to the doctor. She placed it in his hand, they kissed again, smiled, chatted briefly, and she was gone.

Sometimes people touch our lives in small but significant ways. I only exchanged brief words with the man, and I didn't talk to the woman at all, but throughout the day their exchange kept coming to mind.

It reminded me that how I show love to the people in my life doesn't just matter to them, but also to those around me. And I found myself thinking of that Dorothy Day quote: "A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words, and deeds is like that."

Maybe tomorrow I can cast some loving pebbles into that pond.

