

A warm welcome at Mass

I've never paid much attention to what greeters do before Mass. I always smile at them and say hello, maybe compliment a scarf or comment on the weather. Still, I hadn't really considered it a significant job.

At our parish's Scout Mass this week, though, Daniel was a greeter, and he took his role extremely seriously.

Holding the church door open with his back, our first grader called out, "Good morning!" to every person who approached him. Then, because he had been told to give only one Mass program to each family, he would assess the group approaching him and say, "Are you a family?"

Some people would say yes. Others would say no.

Then our little Cub Scout would dutifully dole out the right number of programs.



With a few of the groups our little boy asked, it seemed unlikely that they were families. But he had his instructions, so he asked. Besides, how would he know which groups were families and which were people who happened to park near one another? As a transracial family, our family doesn't necessarily "match," and families come in many varieties.

A few of the people who may or may not have been families smiled at him and said, "We can share."

As for me, standing just a few feet away, I loved watching our little boy in action.

Many of the people walking through stopped to talk to him about Scouting. One lady commented on his two missing front teeth. Several praised him for his kind greeting. And I watched as person after person came past him wearing a bigger smile than before their encounter.

Greeting may not seem like an important role. But we have the opportunity to brighten the life of every person we encounter.

As the opening hymn began, I told our greeter it was time to go in and sit down.

"But people are still coming!" he said—clearly appalled that I was asking him to shirk his responsibility. "Look! There are all those people still walking in!"

He was right, of course. So we waited a few more minutes and greeted some of the latecomers. Why shouldn't they be made to feel especially welcome? It may have been especially difficult time for them to get to Mass.

As the church bell rang, and the people streamed through the doors, I found myself thinking, isn't that person I see every Sunday someone I should know and connect with? Isn't that person pausing to praise my son hoping to help him become the

good, kind man I want him to be some day? Aren't we all part of the body of Christ? Aren't we all a family?

Later, during the homily, when the priest encouraged us to welcome back to the Church friends and family members who may have fallen away from practicing, I found myself thinking of our little greeter. If only we each greeted visitors to church with as much warmth and enthusiasm as our 7-year-old with his handful of programs.

