

The invisible Jesus in our world

As part of my certification process as a personal trainer and group fitness instructor and sports coach, I have to be certified in Adult CPR and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) use. I was also trained in first aid and CPR when I was in the Navy. I feel this is valuable knowledge everyone should have. I want to know that if there is an emergency that I can help in any way possible. I want to know that I can render aid until professionals arrive. I am comforted knowing I have those skills.

I seek those skills because I have to but also because I care. I love people and I want to be the kind of person a stranger or friend can ask for help.

That brings me to today's encounter.

I work Monday nights teaching Turbo Kick at StudioThirty4 in Hampden. Well, I also don't have a car so I was downtown on Howard and Lexington Street waiting for the #27 line to take me to work.

As I walked down the block to make sure I was at the right bus stop, enjoying my music from my iPhone, I saw a man laying on his side at the alleyway. Without missing a beat, I went over to see if he was okay. As I checked on him, most people stared but did nothing. A lady passed by and offered to call 911 but I told her I would handle it. Turns out a shop owner across the street had also called for help for this man but only the police showed up and they gave him a citation and told him to leave. The shop owner did bring him some water. He was genuinely concerned but, short of closing up shop and making another phone call, there was little he could do. After all, the ambulance he called for never arrived.

Steven told me he was homeless and drunk. But he also told me that his ribs hurt, he didn't know why, and I noticed a fresh abrasion on his temple. I knew that my call to 911 had to be as complete as possible but also convey the urgency of the situation. I calmly explained to the operator what was going on, gave her his physical description, and got off the phone. During that time Steven had called his girlfriend, who is in the hospital, to let her know what was going on. He asked me to speak to

her and that's how I found out his name. She was crying as she asked me to make sure he made it to the hospital. I told her I would do my best. One young lady did stop by to make sure I had the situation under control and told me to be careful.

Steven decided he didn't want to stick around and wait for the ambulance and walked down the block. I knew he couldn't get far because his ribs were causing him pain. I saw a Maryland Transit Authority Police Officer and asked him what I could do. He replied that there was nothing as Steven is an adult and cannot be forced to seek medical treatment. I told the officer that Steven didn't believe he should be able to get treatment simply because he is drunk.

What?

The officer said that he wouldn't even keep an eye on him as he went down the street in his cruiser. A short time later the ambulance and a vehicle with two supervisors showed up. I explained what happened and gave them a complete physical description and everything I had observed.

By now, my bus had come and I just couldn't believe that the first police officers on the scene had just given him a citation and went on their way. Maybe they had another call to take. I don't know and this is not an indictment on the Baltimore Police Department, but it did make me wonder. I took to Twitter and Facebook to vent my frustration that any person would be treated that way and that Steven believed he didn't deserve medical treatment.

How many times have we passed someone who could be in distress but we stop and do nothing? We fear for our safety or that we won't know what to do. How many times have we thought about doing something for our community or a charity only to be distracted by something else?

I'm not trying to make you feel guilty as guilt is not what drives my actions. When you take the time to help someone, on a personal level, and can look them in the eye, you are forever changed. It doesn't matter how small your effort seems, you are doing the work we are called to as Catholics, as Christians, and as human beings.

Remember the words of Jesus: "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to

you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'” Matthew 25:40. He was talking about the faithful who fed the hungry, gave the thirsty something to drink, clothed the naked, comforted the sick, invited in strangers, and visited those in prison.

Here’s the deal: it doesn’t take much to extend a hand of mercy to a fellow human being. When we do that we are serving the “Invisible Jesus.” This is the Jesus we see in the face of those who need our help, regardless of social status.

Steven was the “Invisible Jesus” for me today. I may not have been satisfied with the outcome, but I did something. That was the point. Don’t be like the people who just walk by the Stevens of the world and pass judgment and do nothing.

We are called to be merciful. Show the love of God and his mercy and forgiveness through the merciful works we can do for our fellow human beings.