

Reflections

by the
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Life and Death on Highway Two

On the last weekend of September, I drove to Plentywood for a joint parish celebration of Outlook, Westby and Plentywood in a special RENEW liturgy. It was a great event and early that afternoon I shared in a special parish program at St. Philip Bonitus in Scobey where almost 100 people gathered for a three hour workshop on Ministry as part of the RENEW program. Father Michael Kirkness, the pastor of Scobey, who was coming to the presbyterate meeting, accompanied me on the journey back to Great Falls.

After filling up for gas in Glasgow, we continued on. However, about ten miles west of Glasgow, we saw one or two cars stopped on the highway, and a pickup which had rolled over. A young woman was lying on the highway breathing slowly and heavily with blood coming from her lungs. We stopped to help. The injured woman had a weak and dying pulse. A young couple drove up and the woman was a nurse who recognized the need for CPR. She paused a moment and began the CPR process with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. It was almost a miracle. The injured woman began to breathe, and by that time the Rescue Squad had arrived and began the process of helping the accident victim. An ambulance brought her into Glasgow and later to Billings. Father Kirkness and I continued on our journey in silence for a while aware of the remarkable encounter we had with life and death on Highway 2. In Tuesday morning's paper, I read the obituary of the injured woman.

The scene on Highway 2 will remain with me a long time - the broken body of an injured woman on the highway, a stranger who shared the gift of her life and breath, and countless people who stopped to be of assistance. When confronted with such realities, life takes on a new perspective.

Somehow or other, the ultimate reality of death puts everything in perspective. The only important question for any of us is the concern for our spiritual life as we stand before God in that split second between time and eternity. What counts then is what Jesus described in the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel. Have we seen Jesus where we least expect him - among the poor, the hungry, the homeless? One of the great benefits of RENEW is that in reflecting on the word of God, we are forced to ask that important question.

A Sunday afternoon drive on Highway 2 is more than a journey from Scobey to Great Falls. It is an experience that confronted me with the realities of life and death - in time and in eternity.