

Item #81 (Road Love)

On a lovely October late afternoon I was celebrating my 75th anniversary of entrance in the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) with my younger sister, age 91, and a nephew in his mid 60s and niece in her late 50s, both children of my sister. We had finished eating a modest dinner in a roadside table in the St. Louis suburb of Kirkwood. My niece had parked her car in a parking lot across the street, and she and I walked across the street so that she could move her car and park it on the street to bring it as close as possible for her mother who was suffering from partial dementia and was extremely slow of movement behind her walker so that watching her walk was like watching a blob of frozen molasses trying to flow up a hill. Strictly speaking I suppose that my niece and I should have gone to the nearby intersection about thirty yards away and crossed the street there. But the street was quite narrow and there was little traffic and in five seconds we were across. My nephew chose the same course; it would have taken him a good ten minutes or more for him to help his mother to the intersection, cross, and return to his sister's parked car where she was in the driver's seat and I was next to her. But no sooner did my nephew get his mother behind her walker poised to cross the street than a car turned the corner at the intersection and began to approach the spot where my nephew and his mother were about to cross. But while the driver was still a good twenty yards away the driver stopped. He/she had perceived the situation and by stopping had given my nephew approval for his crossing where he was. And cross he did and got his mother into the back seat of our car and had taken her walker to put it in the trunk in the rear. When the driver of the car in the street saw that the crossing was accomplished he/she began to move forward, gradually gathering speed. I told my niece next to me to be sure to wave as he/she went by. This we did, and to my immense satisfaction he/she waved back. (All car windows were closed and the glare of the setting sun made closer identification impossible.) I can't begin to express my satisfaction at seeing that waving hand of the car as it passed. The waving hand said "Glad to help out" and so disappeared. No road rage there, only road love. The awareness of the Christian need to love one's neighbor had been in action and the four of us had been its beneficiaries. (James Swetnam, S.J. – November 2, 2021)