Different View

For the Journey

I think we’ve all had “driveway moments.” That’s when your favorite song comes on the car radio as you arrive home and you linger to listen. Or maybe it’s a National Public Radio story you have to finish.

So, I was appalled at the harrowing story told by Bryan Stevenson in his book (also made into a movie), “Just Mercy.” We’ve all been in the car, but we’ve not all had the same experience. And race can make a difference.

Stevenson is a Harvard-educated lawyer and the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to representing the poor and the wrongly condemned. That’s the focus of his engaging book.

But he introduces us to the way race often plays out in our system when he, a Black man, was pulled over by police officers. A female officer yelled. The second officer came up military attire, drew a weapon and pointed it at him as neighbors gathered. Finally, after a recording.

Immediately, one of the policemen, clad in military attire, pointed a gun at him before, and he knew the inclination was to run. No one had ever told by Bryan Stevenson in his book (also made into a movie), “Just Mercy.”

As a white woman, I’d never feel afraid of police. The fact that this educated lawyer even mentions that his first inclination was to run. No one had ever told him not to be afraid.

Pointing a gun at a Black man is not the same experience. And race can make a difference.

This is not an us versus them situation. We’re in this together. Good police departments want accountability, better training for new recruits and assistance with the many mental health calls with which they’re forced to deal.

Stevenson mentions that his first inclination was to run. No one had ever pointed a gun at him before, and he knew the statistics about Black encounters with police. Running makes no sense, until terror overcomes common sense.

As a white woman, I’d never feel afraid of the police. In my younger years, I’d been stopped for speeding a time or two. I’ve encountered friendly officers and one overbearing one. I’m sure I was nervous — those flashing lights can make anyone sweat — but I’ve never been afraid.

By introducing more officers into Black neighborhoods and educating young minorities on their rights, perhaps we can all move toward understanding we’re in this together. And prayerfully reading and reflecting on “Just Mercy” might help to foster an understanding of the challenges Black Americans face in our criminal justice system.

Driven Moments and Justice

For the Journey

by Effie Caldarola

Catholic News Service

Different View

By Patrick Winn

Director, Rockford Diocese
Catholic Charities

By Effie Caldarola

For the Journey

It’s Time to Go

Long good-byes can become uncomfortable, even a bit maudlin. Suffice to say, it’s time. After nine years, it’s time for another to lead this faith-based organization of faith-filled professionals, the Rockford Catholic Social Services and Catholic Charities.

Catholic Charities has the enviable role of representing the Church in the lives of families across our diocese. We assist whomever and however we can, and there will never be enough time, money, employees or volunteers to complete the job.

Scripture reminds us that the poor will be with us always. Our poor are the hungry, homeless and unemployed; the anxious, aged and lonely; the abused and trafficked; the forgotten and unheard. Our one collective regret is that we cannot do more.

What we never regret is serving with people who serve the people we serve. They are strong, dedicated individuals who decided to devote themselves to others’ needs. They are that part of the communion of Saints who step up to serve, confident that even the smallest of acts done in charity affect everyone. They turn needs into results; results into lives transformed in tangible and spiritual ways; ways that are meaningful for our guests, clients and colleagues, often understated and subtle.

To Bishop Malloy, the clergy and colleagues who have inspired, guided, encouraged, agreed and disagreed over the past nine years, thank you for everything you have done, everything you have given, and everything you bring in service:

May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back.

The sun shine warm upon your face, the rain fall soft upon your fields.

And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

— Traditional Irish Blessing

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— The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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Our Catholic View

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