

Grace 'n' Grits

Lessons from Marrying a Homeless Man

Twelve years ago I married a homeless man. Following a breakdown, Jim had lived on the streets of Orlando for a year. Marrying him was the best thing I ever did.

On a recent Saturday morning walk in Sanford, Florida, Jim and I discovered an ecumenical group called Grace 'n' Grits (holycrosssanford.info) feeding breakfast to about 80 homeless men, women, and children. Soon we were on the team.

Church doors swung open and all were welcomed with plates heaping with scrambled eggs, pancakes, grits, sausage, and hash browns. Donated sweet rolls and apples filled the take-home bags.

"Thank you, ma'am." "God bless you!" "Can I have more pancakes?" Oh, the smiles.

Jim never ceases to remind me that all it takes is one person to risk making the difference — how, in our case, he credits me with taking that risk to make a difference in his life. I credit God.



"Let's beware of our drive for efficiency," Jim counsels. "Why should this be a well-ordered business? When these bent, unkempt folk pour into the hall, let's take the time to make contact with each one. In my months on the street, that's what I wanted most. Even a 'good morning' would do!"

Like any other American city, Sanford, Florida, walks the line between compassion and presentability. Social services strain to lend a hand as faceless ones are advised to vacate park benches open to everyone else.

Recently, the founder of Grace 'n' Grits told us he got a \$700 check from a formerly homeless man he had fed years ago. "You fed me!" he said. "Take this and feed others."

The homeless are mainly decent folk who happen to be traveling off the beaten path. If we offer them even a breakfast, perhaps we can smooth the road back.

—Adele Azar-Rucquoi