



Pastor's Message

June 19, 2020

When I was young boy, my family rented a first floor apartment at 109 Grand Street in Paterson. One of our neighbors was a very elderly man, toothless, white hair, always wearing a white tee shirt and khaki pants. His name was Emil.

Emil was a widower. He had a beautiful garden. And, on either warm or hot evenings during the year, Emil sat on his back porch and played the accordion for all the neighbors. As I happily recall, all the neighbors enjoyed listening to the music from his accordion.

However, the most significant memory of “Old Man Emil,” was how remarkably kind he was to me and the other juvenile delinquents, I called my friends! For example, when our football or baseball went into his beautiful garden, we called out his name to come and get the ball for us. And he did, with very few complaints. Also, I fondly remember when Emil caught us picking a tomato or two from the garden, he would reprimand us, and then a toothless smile would appear, after his correction was done. Moreover, I remember after, “cutting through his yard,” to get to my house so many times, Emil would get displeased, but never, ever tell my parents what I did!

Why was Emil so kind to the young kids, like me? Maybe, he remembered some of his own antics as a youngster, so how could he get so annoyed at us? Or, could it have been he knew hurt and loss being a lonely widower, so Emil did not want any of us to experience separation from him as a neighbor? Perhaps, his kindness was rooted in the fact he wanted to provide the lesson that when correcting the wrongs we had done, expressing anger doesn't have to be coupled with the lesson being taught.

Kindness to young people! Emil seemingly mastered it! To this day, I am inspired by him.

Be kind to young people as Emil was to me and my friends on Grand Street. Recall what you did as a youngster before releasing any relentless yelling. Remember, it is not the message, but how the message is conveyed which may result in either unifying or separating young kids from you. Finally, very often lessons can be taught by recalling what was the most effective way you learned right from wrong, by the adults who influenced you in a positive manner.

Thanks, Emil, my friend! I appreciate your inspiration.

Peace,
Fr. Marc