By Erin Johnson

Tonight (it's midnight on Wednesday) as I'm settling in after a long but awesome and rewarding day of work, I can't help but to think about a man that I met earlier. I was helping out at the soup kitchen. I didn't think too much of it, just said a quick prayer before starting that God would bless all of the guests. About twenty minutes into service, a man in a red shirt grabbed my arm as I walked by and said, "Do you have a minute to talk?"

Shamefully, my first thought was, "there's still so much to be done, and secondly, what do you want to talk about anyway?" Thanks be to God however, I slowed down, and took a moment to take in the situation and, surrendering, I eased into the seat next to him at the table. He told me that he was just in a terrible car accident and that his girlfriend was killed by a drunk driver, but he lived. He admitted to having a drinking problem himself but that he was trying to get help. He wondered if God was trying to send him a message.

He and his girlfriend had three small children, the oldest only ten. He said that he just got out of the hospital and was afraid to go home and see his kids because he wasn't sure how he was going to tell them that their Mom is dead. He had an engagement ring and had been planning on marrying her. He described her as the love of his life and his best friend. He was grieving and angry. He wished he'd done things right and married her over 15 years ago when they met. He wished that he could have told her how much he loved her.

He said that he came to St. Martins because he knew that he could get prayer and a hot meal here. He needed to speak to a Christian about his situation. He was so hungry! He was hungry for someone to reassure him; hungry for someone to give him hope; hungry for Jesus. The employees and volunteers of the soup kitchen were great and were able to get him some of the help that he's going to need. However, he has a long road ahead of him.

As I climb into bed tonight, I just can't help but wonder what's going on in his home. Did he tell his children about their mother's death? Did they cry themselves to sleep? Was he able to find the spiritual and material help that he needed?

Before our conversation ended, I got his name and promised many prayers for him and his family.

So I ask you to please take time when you read this to remember and to pray for Jay.

God bless,

Erin

Erin Johnson is the youth director at St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland and is a member of TOP's Board of Directors