
It Happens Everywhere

Nobody saw the old man fall. He tumbled down the last few stairs and lay, stretched silent and meager on the narrow platform of the Wall St. subway station. It was the noon hour, and people are in a hurry then along the street where the world buys and sells. Some men stepped over the small, sprawled figure; and others walked to the other side of the stairway, pausing only for a quick glance.

A subway trackwalker and a young, well-dressed man who looked like a broker, saw the old man. The subway worker bent and lifted the old man to a sitting position. The well-dressed young man, heedless of a pool of spreading blood, knelt to feel the feeble pulse. "I can hardly feel it."

Someone ran upstairs to the change booth to summon help. The other two men gently laid the old man back down and put a newspaper under his head. The color drained out of his wrinkled face like a thermometer, leaving the skin as colorless as his white mustache and thin hair. "What happened -- he fall?" said a bystander, and climbed on up the stairs when the young man nodded his head.

The subway worker and the well-dressed young man watched alone as a glaze came slowly over the blue eyes looking up from the platform. The mouth gradually gaped open as slack facial muscles let go forever. "This man is dead," said the subway worker. "Yes, there's no more pulse," agreed the young man. "All we can do is pray."

So there on the station platform with cars coming and going, carrying heedless hundreds on the errands of life, the young man knelt by the side of the dead, and lifted up his voice: "Our Father Who art in heaven..."

The grimy subway worker knelt, too, and joined him: "Hallowed be Thy name..."

Frightened women moved away from the scene, but half a dozen men halted. At first self consciously they took off their hats, and knelt on one knee, with the other leg ready to be gone.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done..." the young man said. The others picked up the ancient chant: "On earth as it is in heaven... Give us this day our daily bread ..." the voices became fuller.

The young man led them in the "Hail Mary" and then they chanted after him..."Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. World without end. Amen."

Someone said: "God rest his soul." And as if that were a signal to release them, the crowd melted back into the daily routine of their lives. But the two original Samaritans -- the trackwalker and the young man -- covered up the dead man's face and stayed to keep him company, while the subway cars rumbled past in strange requiem.

Death isn't as lonely as life in the endless flow of Manhattan.

-(Hal Boyle, in the Long Island Daily Star)

PRAYERS -- Deceased: father of Tom Judge of St. Ed's; cousin of Mark Westervelt of Cavanaugh; friend of Thomas Crowe of Cavanaugh; mother of Brother DePaul, C.S.C.; John R. Corcoran, '52; father-in-law of Bill Hawley, '54; Clyde Zoia, '20; wife of Jesse Jolly, '54; Hugh J. Murphy, '34; Ill: father of Tom Farrell of Zahm; Jesse Jolly (polio) John T. Crowley; Sister M. Grace, OP; father of Charles Adie of Cavanaugh; our Holy Cross Fathers: Heston, Hebert, Mathis, Mulcaire, Keller, and Condon. 2 Sp. Int's.