

Shoes

by Wayne Goff

I showered and shaved, I adjusted my tie. I got there and sat,
in a pew just in time.
Bowing my head in prayer, as I closed my eyes.
I saw the shoe of the man next to me, touching my own. I
sighed.

With plenty of room on either side I thought "why must our
soles touch?"
It bothered me, his shoe touching mine, but it didn't bother him
much.

A prayer began: "Our Father..." I thought, "this man with the
shoes has no pride.
They're dusty, worn, and scratched. Even worse, there are
holes on the side!"

"Thank you for blessings," the prayer went on. The shoe man
said a quiet "Amen."
I tried to focus on the prayer, but my thoughts were on his
shoes again.

Aren't we supposed to look our best when walking through that
door?
"Well, this certainly isn't it," I thought glancing toward the floor.

Then the prayer was ended, and the songs of praise began.
The shoe man was certainly loud, sounding proud as he sang.

His voice lifted the rafters, his voice was raised high.
The Lord could surely hear the shoe man's voice from the sky.

It was time for the offering and what I threw in was steep.
I watched as the shoe man reached into his pockets so deep.

I saw what was pulled out, what the shoe man put in.
Then I heard a soft "clink" as when silver hits tin.

The sermon really bored me to tears, and that's no lie,
It was the same for the shoe man for tears fell from his eyes.

At the end of the service as is the custom here,
We must greet new visitors and show them all good cheer.

But I felt moved somehow and wanted to meet the shoe man,
So after the closing prayer I reached over and shook his hand.

He was old and his skin was dark and his hair was truly a
mess,

But I thanked him for coming, for being our guest.

He said, "my name is Charlie I'm glad to meet you, my friend."
There were tears in his eyes, but he had a large, wide grin.

"Let me explain," he said, wiping tears from his eyes.
"I've been coming here for months, you're the first to say 'Hi.'"

"I know that my appearance is not like all the rest,
But I really do try to always look my best."

"I always clean and polish my shoes before my very long walk.
But by the time I get here they're dirty and dusty, like chalk."

My heart filled with pain and I swallowed to hide my tears
As he continued to apologize for daring to sit so near.

He said, "When I get here I know I must look a sight.
But I thought if I could touch you, maybe our souls might
unite."

I was silent for a moment, knowing whatever was said,
Would pale in comparison I spoke from my heart, not my head.

"Oh, you've touched me, "I said" and taught me, in part;
That the best of any man is what is found in his heart."

The rest, I thought, this shoe man will never know.
Like just how thankful I really am that his dirty old shoe
touched my soul.

Editor's Note: This poem is a reminder of the importance of greeting our visitors and treating them as honored guests. We are a friendly congregation, but we must not overlook those especially who sit near the back and are quick to exit. Take the time to go back, greet them warmly, and ask if you can be of assistance to them spiritually.

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