

WORD IN ACTION

Encounter with a stranger

Recently, I participated in a retreat at the Focolare Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City. It was an intense but beautiful weekend. It helped me not only to recharge my batteries but also helped me to reconnect with God. I must admit that my mind had been all over the place as the same week, I had started a new job without having even a small break in between. I felt a bit tired!

Straight after the meeting, which finished with lunch on Sunday, I had to rush home to finish the birthday preparations for one of my daughters. The party went well, however, I felt that I needed an hour or so to chill.

Luckily, it is the World Cup year! As a football lover, I was invited to a friend's house to watch a game between two really good teams; Poland and Columbia. The rest is history! I came home rather unhappy as we lost (again) and Poland was out...

When I returned home, it was already late. I looked through the window and I saw a guy who was struggling with a punctured tyre. I checked to see whether he was OK. He actually had two punctures!

We tried to replace the tyres but it was getting dark and the work was difficult by the roadside. As he was from Peterborough, I suggested that I could take him to Stevenage (ten miles up the A1) so that he could catch a train home. He agreed and would come back to pick up the car the following day. During the drive to the station we had a lovely conversation about many things: He was originally from Pakistan; about life in the UK, work etc.

When I dropped him off, he said to me: 'You are a true Ambassador of your country.' I thanked him but when I was driving back I thought that while being the 'Polish Ambassador' is nice, it is more important to be the 'Ambassador for unity and diversity'.

This experience taught me a lot. Sometimes a simple gesture can make a huge difference. Sometimes a simple smile can change attitudes and break down barriers.

Being there for the other person is so rewarding. That evening I really wanted to go to bed early. However

I was so grateful for this wonderful moment with this 'stranger' who now calls me a brother!

This first part of the week could be summed up by a quote which I received from a colleague of mine: 'A bad attitude is like a flat tyre, you can't go anywhere until you change it.'

Michal Siewniak shares how a simple act of kindness can help overcome disappointment during the World Cup.

