



*Mrs. Alt!* 😊

Good Morning! I came across this photo a couple of weeks ago. I have no idea when or where it was taken. I have absolutely no clue. Even more mysterious is the person sitting behind me. Her name is Donna Alt and she was my Sunday School teacher when I would visit St Mark's Lutheran Church with my Grandma and Grandpa Meister. I have no idea what so ever why I would have been on a speed boat with her in middle of what looks like the Illinois River.

I also have no idea how many times I visited her class specifically. What I do remember is the day I visited and she announced "Last week, I was never more embarrassed of St Mark Lutheran Church than I am right now!" Gulp. Mind you we were all about mid to late high school, one of the most egocentric ages ever, but you could feel the remorse in the room. Heck, even I felt horrible and I wasn't even there the week before!

It seems the Sunday before a homeless man wandered into the service. He was promptly escorted out but the ushers. "But he smelled bad!" exclaimed one of the students. "And what if we were being tested by Jesus? I would say St Marks failed miserably." Donna Alt countered. She proceed to go on with the Sunday School lesson that - no- I don't remember either.

Life moved on for all of us but her words stuck with me. It wasn't until recently I realized why. Yes, it made me stop and think before I judged others. Cured some of the egocentric tendencies of the teen years. It did that.

Yet, her admonition ended up sinking in further than that. She modeled the whole "truth in love" aspect of church discipline. Not to be mean. Not to tear someone down or bad mouth the church. Instead of leaving the gentleman there where he could hear the word of God, the comfort of the congregants were thought of first. She simply pointed out "Hey! That wasn't right!" She had the courage to say what needed to be said.

Fast forward about 55-56 years later, Christians seem to be grappling even harder with this idea of "speaking truth in love." How do we say "No!" to a culture that as soon as we push back declares all Christians mean bigoted homophobes? Honestly? I'm not sure.

I do know, as Christians, we need to have thicker skins. If being called a bigot because you support the biblical stance of marriage (or whatever) is the worst thing that happens to you today then I think you'll be ok. There are folks in the Middle East that die just because they get caught owning a Bible.

There is a second part to the Donna Alt story. Years later my family was visiting Grandma and Grandpa Meister at Easter. I let everyone go ahead so I could find Donna. I thanked her for the lesson. She told me what happened the rest of that day.

Her and her husband went and found the gentleman. They took him home, found clothes and let him shower. They fed him and then put him on the bus to wherever his brother lived. The guy thought he could have a second chance there.

They did what needed to be done. And then said what needed to be said.

Donna and her husband are with the Lord. We are still here. Church, do we have courage to do the same?

Now is the time-

Susan and Joe.