

A treasured heirloom, handed down from Grandma, speaks to the value in all of us.

ROYALTY

“If you’ve got a minute Martin, I need to stop by Joey’s.”

“What, John, don’t tell me you’re looking for an engagement ring for your intended?” Reverend Williams asks; a devilish smile lighting up his face.

Recognizing the humor in Martin’s words, the man in the Roman collar plays along.

“Oh yea, Martin, I intent to surprise her ... and the bishop.”

“Yea, I’ll bet your Bishop Richardson will be tickled to hear your plans,” Martin says, laughing at the thought, not to mention the look on Father John’s face.

“Tickled isn’t the word,” the priest says, laughing along with Martin ...

“... with all he has on his plate, I’m thinking it ought to make his day.”

Hi, Tony here. It’s a cold, windy early February morning here in the neighborhood. Clouds, grey and ominous, scurry across the

sky as a chill wind blows; portending the snow forecast for later today.

Father John and Reverend Williams are heading to Sam's for some midmorning coffee and pastries, and to work on Sunday's upcoming sermons. For these two it's virtually a weekly occurrence. With the gospel reading this week being the Pearl of Great Price, I know these two will come up with some fine words for their respective congregations.

In addition to his design talent, Joey is one of only a couple of jewelers in a five-hundred-mile radius who actually cut and fashion precious gemstones. Given that skill, his talent for design, and Joey's penchant for finding deeper meanings in the gems he sells, this morning's conversation could be an interesting one.

What say, we listen in?...

“Actually, why are we stopping here, John?”

“Just need to ask Joey a question about one of our adult-ed programs.”

Pantomiming mopping his brow, Martin laughs softly. “Well, that's a relief. Wouldn't want to see you

excommunicated. After all, who would I find to help me write my sermons?”

“Well, there’s always “Sermons are Us” on the internet,” the priest chuckles.

Shaking his head, Martin closes the door to Joey’s shop behind him as the two men enter. Turning, both men are surprised to see Alyssa Kossarides along with her dad, Nick.

“Hey, look who’s here John,” the Baptist minister says, shaking Nick’s hand and beaming at Alyssa, “Nice to see you two.”

“So, what magic is Joey working today,” Father John asks.

“He’s fixing an amethyst ring Alyssa’s grandma left her.” Nick says. “Been beaten up over the years. Lot of wear and tear.”

“You could say, Uncle Joey’s bringing it back from the dead,” Alyssa laughs.

“Another resurrections story, I take it?” the priest says winking playfully at the young lady.

“Definitely, Father,” Alyssa replies.

“Sounds like it means a lot to you.”

“Oh, yea. It was Noni’s favorite ring and mine ever since I was five years old. I always loved it when Noni would have Sunday dinner at her house. We would dress up and she always wore that ring.”

“Andrea’s dad got it in Brazil in ‘46, right after the war,” Nick says. “He was a sailor on an aircraft carrier in port at Buenos Aires. Paid the princely sum of six dollars back then.”

“If I recall, six bucks was serious money in 1946,” Joey says, walking in from the back room. Spying the men of the cloth, Joey greets each, smiling at their unexpected appearance.

“Father ... Reverend Williams, good to see you,” he says, shaking their hands.

“Is it finished, Uncle Joey,” Alyssa asks?

Opening a velvet box, Joey reveals the result of his work. At first look, Alyssa, gasps.

“It’s so much more purple than when I brought it in. I was hoping you could bring back the color, but this is wonderful.” Then looking at the jeweler, Alyssa’s face registers a bit of confusion. “You’re sure it’s the same stone?”

“The very one, Alyssa. The reason the color is more intense is because of the angles I was forced to use to cut the damage out of the girdle or the stone,” he says, recognizing’s her confusion.

“The girdle?” Father John, laughs

“Yea, Father, the outer rim. It was chipped and repairing it, I had to steepen the angles on the pavilion of the stone.”

“The pavilion?” Nick asks, wearing the same look on the priest’s face.

“The bottom portion of the stone. Deepening the angles intensifies the color. The stone was shallow and badly abraded masking the color and causing it to leak out of the bottom. Too shallow and the gem loses its beauty; it looks pale. Too deep, it becomes dark to the point it can look almost black.”

At Joey’s explanation, an unspoken question ambles across Alyssa’s face.

“Think of it like taking a glass of water out of the ocean, Alyssa,” Joey continues, seeing the look on the teen’s face. “In clear glass, the water looks colorless. But the volume, the depth, of the ocean makes the water appear blue.”

“So, the stone becomes more beautiful, when it is deeper and not shallow,” Alyssa asks.

“That it does,” Joey says.

“Remember that when you go picking a boyfriend,” Nick says, chuckling softly. “Like this pretty gem, boys need to have some depth for their value to shine through.”

“I already know that, daddy,” Alyssa says, smiling, and giving her dad’s shoulder a quick hug.

“So, not being shallow is a good thing?” Martin asks. Pausing a moment, he nods his head; turning to

the priest. "I think I know where Sunday's sermon is coming from, John," he says.

The conversation lapses as the ring is passed around. Handing it back to his little girl, Nick, turns to the jeweler.

"Joey, you have a way of seeing a deeper meaning in things. What do you see in this stone?"

"Well, the color purple has traditionally been associated with royalty," he says after a moment's pause. "The finest amethyst is a deep royal purple. Legend has it, in earlier times, royalty drank from goblets of pure amethyst, as an indication of their status."

"Interesting," Father John says, quietly.

"In reality, however, the goblets were clear rock crystal and it was the color of the wine that gave it its royal color."

A knowing smile ambling across his face, Joey winks at Father John. Chuckling, the priest picks up on Joeys thought.

"And you're saying the goblet and its contents are an analogy for our relationship with our Lord."

"And that would be, Father?" Nick asks.

"Do you remember our Lord's words ... it's not what goes into a man that makes him impure, but what comes out of him..."

“I think I know where Father John is going,” Alyssa says.

“I think I do too, sweetheart,” Nick smiles and says as he wraps his arm around his little girl’s shoulders.

“You know Alyssa, your dad made a really good point when it comes to looking for a boyfriend.”

Nick chuckles. “Thanks Father, he says, I was hoping she’d get that.”

“I did, daddy” the teen chuckles.

“No problem, Nick,” Father John says. “When speaking of our Lord, look carefully into the stories about Him, and you see a real babe magnet.”

The words, ‘babe magnet,’ bring another soft giggle from Alyssa.

“His personality and character shine through and it’s those attributes a young woman should seek,” the priest continues. “A pretty face is nice, but it’s Christ’s character, His confidence, His courage, and His respect, that comes from deep within; like the beauty of this precious gem.”

“Our baptism makes us like a clear crystal goblet,” Joey says, picking up on the priest’s thought. “As we grow, we pour the King of Kings into our glass, so to speak. And it’s His royal presence, that gives us our color, our royalty. It’s not the goblet, it’s the contents ...”

“And another thing, Amethyst isn’t an overly rare gemstone. Granted, its deeper hues aren’t as common, but even the finest shades are within the reach of most people.”

“So, Joey, you’re saying, all who fill themselves with our Lord’s love and His Law are royal vessels; men and women of great beauty and worth,” Martin adds.

Nodding in appreciation, a smile ambles across Joey’s face ...

“... couldn’t have said it better myself, Reverend.”

Through His creation, Our Lord quietly speaks of the regard in which He holds each and every one of us.

Amethyst comes in beautiful crystals. But it takes a man’s effort and skill to bring out its ultimate beauty in a finished form. To arrive at the gemstone’s true worth, man must complete what God has freely given; what the Creator has started.

And like the amethyst, a man must take what God has provided, and bring out the beauty in himself. Ask yourself; how disappointed would our Creator be if we didn’t finish the amethyst, or ourselves?

After all, our God makes very little on this earth of ours in finished form ...

... including us.

Thinkaboutit ... I'm Tony Baggz.