By Jim Langham

'A little dab' of compassion

Many of us elderly people can remember a commercial from years ago that incorporated the line, “a little dab will do ya!” It represented a hair cream from an era when it was cool for men to slick their hair and paste it back to “slick up” for a special occasion. It was part of a song in a commercial where the man greased his hands with the cream and then rubbed it through his hair.

The thought of that “dab” came to my mind a couple of years ago when I was visiting a large university during the spring, when blossoming trees and bright sunshine was beaming forth in much the same manner as we have enjoyed this spring. Students, caught up in the atmosphere of spring, were riding their bikes, laughing, joking and frolicking with happiness in the bright sunshine.

In the midst of all of this, I was taking a low profile as I walked around taking pictures of the sunlight silhouetting the brilliant flowers, happy people pictures and cathedrals lifting their praise to the deep blue sky.

After I picked up a sandwich at a sorority fund-raiser, I was in the process of taking a picture of a blossoming magnolia tree when a student suddenly tapped me on the shoulder.

“Excuse me,” he said, “but could you tell me what time it is?”

“Three-forty,” I replied.

But that wasn’t the end of our conversation. With a flash of bewilderment in his eyes, he exclaimed, “Sir, you’re bleeding.”

I was? Where?

“Right there,” he said, pointing to my forehead.

Apparently, I had scratched my forehead on a twig somewhere in my picture-taking efforts and there was just a dab of blood there.

In fact, it was so small that I couldn’t find it with my handkerchief at first.

Finally, the lad said, “Here, let me do it for you.”

Very gently he took the cloth and dabbed blood about the size of a small seed. My heart was immediately touched by his compassion for such a small wound.

That compassion left behind a lesson in how we should care about the small hurts in each other as well as the large pains.

To me, it represented how important it can be when we take the time to show just a “little dab” of compassion to those around us – an encouragement card in a time of discouragement, a cheery hello while waiting at a cash register, a smile to someone we meet on the street, or a caring, “How are things going?” to someone who has been going through a difficult time.

I was reminded once again, how often in our busyness, we tend to overlook crying children, exasperated mothers or elderly people in wheelchairs, courtesy for the handicapped or a moment to check on a stranded individual.

The reach of a child, a phone call from a frustrated friend, a simple prayer request, a fevered brow – small cuts, tiny cries of help.

Like the old commercial, “just a little dab will do ya.”

Just a dab – an encouragement card, a prayer, a call of support, a show of concern, can change the entire day.

“Bear one another’s burdens and fulfill the law of Christ,” is the way the Apostle Paul worded it, kind of like the lady who broke a small alabaster box of perfume and poured it over the feet of Jesus, a small gift, but one He referred to as the “best gift.”

Just a little dab, but its worth was like the touch of God in the midst of a bustling college campus on a busy spring day.