

## Inspiring Poem: The Shoe Man

Inspirational Poem about Acceptance

My alarm went off  
It was Sunday again.  
I was sleepy and tired  
My one day to sleep in.  
But the guilt I would feel  
The rest of the day  
Would have been too much  
So I'd go and I'd pray.

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 hands were 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 names' 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  
And 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  
Then 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.

-Author Unknown