

Pentecost – June 8&9, 2019 – Reflection

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.”

(I Corinthians 12)

For several summers when we were older teens and young adults, my brother Peter and I worked as dockworkers in Brooklyn to earn money for school. One summer, the teamsters went out on strike, and so, since we were in the union too, we had no work and that meant we had no money. Our Mom kinda took pity on us and tried to give us chores to do around the house for which she'd pay us if they were completed according to her exacting standards.

Now, I don't really mind lotsa the things that hafta be done around the house: I can't say that I love it, but I'm really good at cleaning bathrooms; dusting's something I have "Pledged" to do; vacuuming sucks but I'm not bad at that; grocery shopping's a piece o' cake; I really cleaned up doing the wash and I can fold clothes better than Marie Condo! But I gotta confess, I really hate ironing. I guess I take after my Mom in that. She hated it so much that my Dad let her hire a housekeeper when I was young, I think, just so the lady would do the ironing and my Dad could have fresh-pressed shirts for work. Well, that strike summer, our housekeeper was only a distant memory, but my Mom still hated ironing. That was the task she gave me to earn my

money. She told me to iron the pile of clothes that was in my parents' bedroom. I needed a Sherpa to guide me to the top of the pile, but once I had scaled the peak, I set about dispatching the wrinkles, reinforcing the creases, sprinkling when needed, steaming when called for, even using spray starch for crispness. Days after I began, I was nearing the bottom of the mountain. Seeing one last item, I called to my Mom in the kitchen if I really needed to do everything. She called back, everything ... or no pay. I went to see her face to face to ask her if I had to iron the piece of clothing I was holding. It was a little white shirt I had last worn when I was five and starting out in First Grade. She looked at it, kinda sputtered a little, and said well, okay, not that. Golly, my Mom hated ironing more than I ever suspected!!

That little shirt was lost in a pile for years. No one used it, no one wore it, heck, it wasn't even repurposed as a dust rag ... it just sat there forgotten.

On the day of our Baptism, we were anointed with the presence of the Holy Spirit of God and we received gifts for our birthday into the Church: Wisdom; Understanding; Right Judgment; Courage; Knowledge; Piety; Wonder and Awe. Most of us were too little to know we had these gifts, much less know how to use them. It was up to our parents to open those gifts for us and show us how to use them.

We learned more about those gifts in catechism class or in Catholic school, at Mass and in the other sacraments we received, especially Penance and Holy Communion. And, when we were old enough to speak for ourselves, we Confirmed that we were in Christ's Church and were His faithful disciples. All of us in Confirmation received a booster shot of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the anointing that raised us to the

dignity of children of God. Some of us were even smacked in the face to remind us that Christianity was no walk in the park and that we'd need God's gifts to help us along the way.

Then what happened? Some of us opened the gifts and became powerful witnesses to the Gospel, to Christ in the world ... some of us. But many of us, maybe even most of us, stopped learning about God's gifts, stopped going to Mass, stopped receiving the sacraments, stopped praying. We tossed the gifts in the corner, unused, forgotten. We let the opportunities to use them in service to the Lord pile up without doing much about it.

Brothers and Sisters, you are gifted by God. You are called to witness to your faith in Jesus Christ not hidden away in some pile of neglected laundry. God wants to shake you up, set you on fire for love of Him, rock your world and blow your socks off, iron out your faults, press you into service, cloth you in the white robe of His elect.

Snap out of your lethargy. There's tons of work to be done and you have all the tools, all the gifts you need to do it.

The Holy Spirit wants to fill you and send you into the whole world to boldly proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. But don't be afraid, have courage. Jesus has told you, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world!"