



THE BROOM, THE HOSE AND THE TRASH CAN LED TO AN EPIPHANY

In a world of social media posts, we have a tendency to share our victories and highlights.

A scroll through the internet will confirm this, showing a world filled with exciting places, perfect meals and stunning people. The perfection of it all is broken only by an occasional video of funny animals, or people behaving badly in public, worthy of our collective laughs or scorn.

The internet is surprisingly devoid of the everyday moments that make up most of our lives — adult children checking on their aging parents, moms praying for their kids or the elderly struggling with tasks once simple but now complicated by age.

We gloss over these moments, preferring storybook endings and air-brushed perfectionism. Yet it is the ordinary we know best.

Catholic parish life is no exception to this. Every parishioner knows Father's greatest hits — after all, you have all heard about them over the years.

However, we tend not to talk about the little moments between the highlight reels — the offering of morning and evening prayers in

rectory chapels, the simple satisfaction of being able to pay all the parish bills at the end of another year or the quiet struggles when no one is looking, the tears shed when faith is strong but life feels overwhelming.

I remember one such moment during the pandemic, in a time lived apart from one another when no one was looking. That memory speaks to a greater reality so often hidden from view.

It was late spring, and I was cleaning the cramped garage at the rectory when I needed a broom. What happened next? I am not sure, but a struggle ensued — me, a broom, a garden hose and a trash can.

Somehow, the broom and the hose had become hopelessly entangled and every time I painstakingly tried to separate them, things only got worse. The trash can kept falling over, and I quickly spiraled into a circle of frustration.

After several failed attempts — and several minutes of muttering and sputtering — I found myself on the floor of the garage in tears.

I broke down, battered from life, in need of more than just a helping hand with the garden hose. I realized my tears had absolutely nothing to do with the circumstance before me, but with everything around me: the pressure of holding things together and trying to maintain a public face of hope for others when what I needed most was someone to do just that for me.

Many priests had housemates and associates — I had a dog, who though kind, could offer little more than doggie snuggles.

After a few minutes, I dusted myself off and got up, shaking my head at myself and made

my way inside to the chapel to sit with Jesus. I did not have much to say to Him, so I just sat with Him, and He with me, and I was not alone — even if it had felt that way just a few minutes prior, in the garage.

It may not be an example of the heroic courage of the martyrs, or the unflinching bravery of our first missionaries, but I suspect all those who have hit a breaking point remember the time and place well, even if the details matter little.

It wasn't about the hose, the broom or the garage, it never was — it was about life, struggle and perseverance.

Over the years I have debated whether to share this simple story, this ordinary moment of being overwhelmed. I was afraid that it might be scoffed at by those who prefer images of priesthood that are devoid of fear, struggle and humanity.

It may not be profound, but I suspect it is more beautiful and common than I may think.

Truthfully, there was no great ending to that day, no life-changing epiphany. I dusted myself off, I sat with God and I kept going. Sometimes, that is a greater victory than we can ever imagine.

After all, holiness is most often forged not in extraordinary moments but rather in profoundly ordinary ones.

Maybe the great ending is simply resigning oneself to sit in God's presence, and letting go of not only the garden hose and the broom but our stubborn insistence on trying to go it alone.

I can't help but wonder if the hardest part of faith is not courage but perseverance. Perhaps that is why God speaks so profoundly in the ordinary. ■



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