

Growing up on 6th Ave. in Watervliet,

I remember a great old neighbor just across from *our* house –

His *name* was Mr. *Healey*.

He *always* had a warm *welcome* for me and all the kids who

Played on the street – back when kids *did* such a thing –

Back when a *neighborhood* was a *neighborhood* –

And everybody *knew* each other –

And *differences* might be put *aside* –

Looking for the common *good* that *bound* us *together*.

20 *years* passed by, and Mr. Healey wound up in a *nursing* home.

My *mother* asked me to *pray* for Mr. Healey's *soul*, as he had *died*.

And *mom* told me a *strange* thing Mr. Healey had *said* as he was entering *death*.

Seemingly half out of his *head* –

He was reliving a *trauma* from WWII.

He saw some *terrible* action in the *Pacific*.

And he was *shouting* to his fellow troops:

Nobody gets out *alive!*

And I *thought* to myself –

Well, ain't *that* the truth!

My friends,

We come *into* this world with *nothing* – in abject *poverty* –

Nothing – that is – but the love of *others* who are willing to *die... to themselves* –

Putting care of their *little ones... first*.

And we *leave* this world with nothing –

Every *one* of us –

Letting go of *everything* – even our *bodies*.

The *only* thing that we carry into heaven is *love* –

Bound in our *baptism* to the very love of *Christ*.

We *cannot... carry* that love, if we cannot *let go... of carrying other* baggage –

Primarily, the baggage and bondage of *pride*!

My friends,

It is *only* from the freedom of love that I *make* this observation –

That *each* of us is a *sinner*!

And if *nothing* else, it's rooted in the sin of *pride*!

I am no *less* as *guilty*.

This realization is *not* to be *down* on ourselves.

It's an *invitation* –

To *let go* of the *blindness*,

The *anger*; the *anxiety*; the *restlessness* of *pride*.

May we *ask* Jesus to help us to *let go* of our *death grip* on *pride*,

And let *Him* fill our hearts –

Hearts *liberated* and *refreshed*.

Jesus *Himself* is our *example*.

This *almighty* God who *loves* us *so* much,

He *humbles* Himself into our human condition.

And from the *Cross* of love,

He *empties* Himself,

Totally –

God enters *death*!

While Mr. *Healey* may be *right*,

We all will *die*! Even *Christ*!

But *Bound* to the *humble* love of *Jesus* –

The most sacred heart *emptied* for us,

Even *death* cannot hold us.

We are *filled* with the very life of God – *forever!*

May we *pray* for the *gift* of *humility*.

And *against* the *trap* of *pride*.

In the Book of *Proverbs*,

We are *warned*:

Pride goeth before ***destruction*** –

And a ***haughty*** spirit, before a ***fall***.

St. *Paul* was *frustrated* with the *Corinthians* today –

These *blessed* people were *filled* with God's *gifts*.

But then, *pride* took over –

They began to think they *deserved* those gifts.

And they loved *themselves* because of these riches,

Forgetting their poverty – their reliance on the *Giver* of those gifts.

Blessed ***are*** the *poor in spirit*,

For ***theirs*** is the Kingdom of ***Heaven!***

Let us *not* puff ourselves *up*.

But *empty* ourselves.

So *Christ* may fill us.

May we *resist* turning God's *generosity* into a justification of our *superiority*.

May we be *patient* with those who *bruise* our egos.

And even *thank* them for *opening* our eyes to the need to let go.

To *empty* ourselves of self-*absorption* –

To *be* filled with the *humble* love of Jesus who *is* life.

And *with* Him in our hearts,

To *be* agents of *reconciliation*.

In the prideful eyes of the *world*, we are *fools* for the love of the *cross*.

But the more we *spend* the love of Jesus –

The more we *receive*.

Blessed are the poor in *Spirit*,

For ***theirs*** is the Kingdom of ***Heaven***.

Breaking *into* the kingdom of *pride*, that *will* crumble and pass *away*.

Let us be *foolhardy* –

Courageously fools! Fools for the Kingdom of *Love* – that endures *all* things.