

Clean up, there is only 30 minutes before bed time...I'm serious you need to finish picking up, there is ten minutes until bed time. Ok, no stories, no prayers...just get in bed.

These were the words I uttered after five hours of trying to get the boys to clean their rooms. I had had it and was done. Done with cleaning, done with herding children, done with everything. I just wanted to go for a walk, but Seth was gone and there I was...just done.

One of my favorite children's books is *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. I'd like to share part of it with you to 'set the mood.' {Read 1st half or so of book}

Have you ever found yourself I need of a time-out and all the spaces are full? We all experience this feeling of exasperation...as parents, spouses, siblings, worker bees, and bosses. What are we to do?

The scripture this week tells us to do everything in love, but how do you love when you are just so mad, so tired, so...everything but loving.

I think it all begins with what happens when you wake up in the morning. What is your outlook on the day? Last Monday, I awoke not feeling so great. I immediately thought about how it was going to be a long day and how much of the housework needed to be done. In other words, I awoke and put on my grumpy pants. Do you ever put on your grumpy pants?

Some think of fashion when they think of the clothes they put on. I think of comfort. My closet is full of jeans and t-shirts...many with holes. Today, I want to talk to you about cleaning out your closets and filling it with Holy clothes, Holy clothes with a capital H not holy clothes like my outdated ones; I want to challenge you to join me in throwing out those tight, unflattering grumpy pants and replacing them with flattering love suits.

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The first part of putting on a love suit is to take off your other clothes. Put away your professional suit and tie or in my case, your sweaty running clothes, and give yourself time to air everything out. I like to do this at the end of the day, but on days like Monday I find that I have to keep changing clothes and giving myself time to air out. You see holy clothes are hard to keep on without prayer. Without prayer, you can put your holy clothes on only to find that you've switched outfits by the time you head out the door. So, take the time to take off your old clothes and ask God to forgive you for wearing your uptight suit.

Holy clothes are put on the same as regular clothes, so put one leg in at a time...thanking God for each leg and praying that he helps you use them to the glory of the Divine. Continue with each of your appendages until you find yourself dressed. Now you have truly been thankful and asked for continued blessing.

You are not done now. As I mentioned before, holy clothes are unique in that they need special suspenders to hold them up. Suspenders of prayer. To keep your perfect fitting, comfy holy clothes on you must be in constant communication with God. I've found the best guide for this practice in a short book called *the practice of the presence OF GOD* by brother Lawrence. "Brother Lawrence insisted that it is necessary to always be aware of God's presence by talking with Him throughout each day. To think that you must abandon conversation with Him in order to deal with the world is erroneous" (p.8). Its is easy for me to think about God whilst at church or doing church work, but I tend to forget all about god when it comes time to wash the dishes. Brother Lawrence was like me in that he was not too fond of housework, especially kitchen work. However, he stated that he developed "quite a facility for doing it" and attributed this too his constant devotion to God. Lawrence advised his brothers and friends to keep their conversations with God short and to the point as our minds tend to wander in lengthy prayer. He advised to say something akin to "Lord, I will never be able to do this if you don't help me" before difficult tasks and if one should fail or sin along the way he advised them not to become upset or distracted by the error but to Pray once more. He usually prayed something like this "I can do nothing better without You [meaning God]. Please keep me from falling and correct the mistakes I make" (p. 11) Brother Lawrence reminded his colleagues that "we must constantly walk in God's Spirit, since in the spirit life, not to advance is to fall back." I have experienced this myself. I try to be at church every Sunday, because I have found that once I miss one Sunday, I begin to miss more and more Sundays. I also try to be involved throughout the week because I find it too easy to become caught up in the worldly when I'm not connected to church. Brother Lawrence would say this is because I am not communing with God on my own, and I'd agree. I don't believe one has to be constantly at the church to keep their Holy clothes on, Brother Lawrence agrees stating that "it isn't necessary to stay in the church in order to remain in God's presence," He advises that "we can make our heart a chapel where we can go to talk to God privately" (p.33) I am not sure about you, but I need some help with my chapel building so I'd advise we keep meeting until our chapels have reached perfection. Brother Lawrence says being in a communion with other believers also helps us "edify and exhort one another and keeps us from the changeableness of our individual whims" (p.78)

So, we have each other for support but how do we start building the chapel within our hearts? Brother Lawrence advises us to start with short phrases such as

- Lord, I'm Yours.
- God of love, I love you with all my heart.
- Lord use me according to your will.

And then to share with God what we are doing, praying before and after each task. He reminds us that “in the way of God thoughts count for little, love does everything” (p. 81)

So now, you hopefully have some insight on how to use your prayer suspenders, or how to keep in constant communion with God, as well as why it is important. Now I want to talk about what it means to wear Holy clothes.

Holy clothes aren't easy to wear because love isn't easy. How many of you have seen the movie *Fireproof*? If you haven't seen it, I'd recommend watching it. It's based on a true story and has inspired the publication of a book called the *Love Dare* that allows you to live out its challenge which is to live in love. The *Love Dare* states that love is built on two pillars –patience and kindness. Patience is love's reaction to a negative aspect and kindness is love in action. Patience is a deep breath, it's when you choose to make lemonade with the lemons you have been handed. Kindness is based on four things: gentleness, helpfulness, willingness, and initiative. As an example of gentleness would be telling your wife that you prefer her purple dress, rather than telling her that her butt looks huge in her red dress. When you show gentleness you are sensitive to the needs and feelings of other. You speak the truth in love rather than harshness. When you are helpful, you put the needs of others before yourself. Instead of thinking about your rights and how you feel, you do your housework without complaint and offer to wash the clothes of your neighbor whose washer broke. We are selfish people, and being helpful for the sake of another without expecting reward, whether physical or verbal, can be difficult. The *Love Dare* states that selfishness is the opposite of love. “Love is never satisfied except in the welfare of others. You can't be acting out of real love and selfishness at the same time.” The third segment of kindness is willingness, which basically means willing to be flexible and constantly looking for compromise. “True love looks for ways to say yes.” Finally, there is initiative. When you live in love you take the first step. You do as directed by God, rather than waiting for others to join you.

I can only speak to what I know, so in my attempt to give you some examples. I may not speak directly to you but hopefully you'll catch on.

As a teacher, you keep your holy clothes on when you pray before entering the building. When you think about if and how you are glorifying God by prepping by the day. When you take a deep breath before confronting the child disrupting your classroom for the third time that day. When you pray before you contact a parent and speak the difficult truth that Johnny is not doing so well in class, in love. When you muse over how your class newsletter reflects the love of Christ and when you thank God at the end of the day for making it possible for you to serve him by teaching.

As a parent, you keep your holy clothes on when you contemplate how you raise your children so that they may be a blessing to others. When you pray for God's guidance when discussing sex with your teenager and when you pray afterwards that you said the right thing and were heard. When you grip the hand of Christ as your child pulls out of the driveway for the first time alone. You keep your holy clothes on when you ask your children and God to forgive you for the mistakes you made and when you pray

and speak gently instead of yelling when you find yourself surrounded by toys and crumbs or when the car comes home with more dents than when it left.

As an engineer, you keep your holy clothes on when you press the power button on your computer and think about how your emails glorify God. When you contemplate what's best for God's creation. When you consider what the bottom line really is and pray for Divine guidance in your planning. You keep your love suit on when you take a breath after learning that your supplier failed to ship the requested parts by the deadline and you take the initiative to work late and figure the situation out for your customer – possibly missing the Broncos game.

As an entrepreneur you keep your holy clothes on by talking over your new ideas with God. By seeking to make God your number one priority in all your business dealings. You keep your holy clothes on when you pray during before, during, after all your dealings with customers and vendors...oh and the bank! You keep your love suit on when you share part of your profits with those in need and when you let off your employee so she can enjoy her family that is in from out of state (without being asked).

As a child, you keep your holy clothes on when you seek out God as a friend. When you ponder how best to represent God through your play and through your words to your classmates, parents, friends. As a child you keep your Holy clothes on by having God as your invisible friend. You live in love when you share your toys and when you smile at the new kid. You live in love when you take a deep breath and hug your mom when she tells you no rather than scream and throw things like you probably really want to do.

In order to keep your Holy clothes on, you must constantly be in conversation with God. God must be at the forefront of your mind and you must be willing to do everything in love. I wanted to have George join me to sing a song for you that gets right to the point of the matter, but it was too new to have the music released. So, I ask you to indulge me in listening to Steven Curtis Chapman sing "Everything You Do" (PLAY video please)

It's a catchy and uplifting tune is it not?

Everything you do to the glory of the One who made you

Cause He made you to do

Every little thing that you do to bring a smile to His face

And tell the story of grace

It sounds good too. Who in this room does not want to make God smile? We all want to make God smile. Some of you aren't too excited about telling the story of grace so it must be a relief that you can tell the story through what you do, right?! The problem is, like many things, doing everything for the glory of God isn't easy. There are simply times when we don't feel too loving. The *Love Dare* challenges the notion of a love as a feeling, stating that "Love in its truest sense is not based on feelings, rather love determines to show thoughtful actions even when there seems to be no reward" (p. 8) Love is not easy, but it is what is required of Christ's followers, of all of God's children. So once again, I challenge you to clean out your closet. Throw out all of your grumpy pants and uptight suits. Take a deep breath, say a quick prayer, and let your self be clothed in Holy clothes. Seek to live in love, by love even when you are challenged by what the world teaches you. Remember to be patient and to live through kindness by being gentle, helpful, willing, and to take the initiative. Most of all, remember that you are never alone. God is right there with you, waiting for you to share all of yourself and to hold you up as you face the challenges of loving.

Benediction:

Lord, may we glorify You

by encouraging someone today...

by thanking You always in all things...

by doing our work heartily, as unto You, knowing that

as we serve others, we are serving You Amen.

Live through and by love my bothers and sisters,

Seeking God always.