

A guest post by my good friend Barbie Rodriguez —

Recently while going through a rough bit, I was sitting in my friendly (and blessedly air-conditioned) neighborhood Laundromat, reading while keeping an eye on my laundry. There was a couple sitting next to me having a heated discussion about one of their relatives being in jail … again … and how they were tired of bailing him out, only to get another phone call a few weeks later. They were running low on patience and money. It was an interesting conversation to be sure. You see a lot of interesting individuals at the Laundromat and sometimes overhearing about others' problems helps to put your own life (and problems) in perspective. I sat there watching the laundry spinning around and around, in its sudsy water, spinning, spinning, spinning. The dryers spinning on the other side. It suddenly came to me that we are like that laundry spinning around in ever-changing patterns. And it is only by faith and faith alone that we don't go hurtling out of control in our continuous spin cycle.

I had been worried about some situations in my life. Heck, I'd be lying if I said I was not worried any longer. The economy has made some things difficult and some things change. But by the grace of God, I am still here, with a job (a blessing a great many of us are without these days), a car that allows me to get to that job, keep a roof over my head and food on the table. Simple blessings many take for granted. But I thank God for those blessings daily. Not a minute, not an hour, a day goes by that I am not thankful for them and for my friends who keep me anchored, even when I feel like letting go. There have been moments these past months when I have seriously doubted everything and everyone. But, strangely enough, those are the moments when this great calm comes upon me and somehow, deep within me, I know that all is as it must be and all will be well. I am reminded of that saying about how God sees the entire picture, we only see bits and pieces.

Sometimes I have been angry and wondered at the why of some things in my life. The illnesses and deaths of my parents. The indifference of the rest of our family. It is so easy to see the ugly side. So easy and oh, so very, very tempting, to turn bitter and spew venom. But then I remember the many, many blessings received. The blessing of loving parents and grandparents. The blessing of a very long childhood. I remember my grandmother living

with us and in charge of the kitchen, her domain, until she slipped away in her sleep in her 90s, and my grandfather walking me to school every day. Not many kids can say that anymore. I had my parents with me until my early 40s, having had them that long was a blessing. How many are out there never having known their parents? Or never having loving, joyful parents? We can look at circumstances either from the half full side of the glass or the half empty. I choose the half full. I give thanks for the blessing of family, friends, of faith, traditions. Especially faith. I remember my Mom, when she was first diagnosed, gathering me close one night and telling me, no matter what happens, no matter how bad it gets, the Virgin Mary is your Mother in Heaven and she will be there for you. I remember my Dad's passing, three years after my Mom, gently slipping away while looking at me, a serene and calm smile on his face. The feeling in his room that night was holy. Peaceful. I truly felt the angels were there with us, welcoming him home.

All these blessings I remembered while watching my laundry spin, becoming clean and fresh again, just like we do when we go to Mass, have a talk with our Father, reaffirm our faith yet again. Isn't it amazing, that no matter how many times we question, how many times we rant and rave, the Father always welcomes us Home. Reaffirms our blessings. The blessings of faith, family, friends. Friends who remind us there are still normal families out there, who hold dear our traditions, raise healthy, happy children and, to use a popular phrase, keep the faith. Bring us joy, laughter, hope.

So, you see, going to the Laundromat can be quite the cleansing experience … in more ways than one. My laundry beeped, I fluffed and folded. Went home, put fresh linens on the bed, fresh towels in the bathroom, clothes on their hangers. Everything fresh and clean. And I felt, yet again, blessed.
– by Barbie Rodriguez

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