

Over the past seven months I've managed to lose a bit of weight. Seventy pounds in all. The first 35 were in the throes of being sick, and the second 35 were getting healthy again.

Part of losing that much weight is that nothing fits me anymore. I've lost 8 inches in my waist, 6 inches in my chest. So, I've taken on the task of "re-wardrobing." Also known as shopping. Great idea for ladies - not always fun for guys.

After all, what do I really need? A black suit and a black shirt as a priest; and a pair of jeans and some smaller t-shirts for kicking around.

A sort-of neat aspect of all of this is that I'm back to the same size I was for the first 30 years of my life. Which means that any clothes I didn't throw out because they didn't fit for the last 20 years - now fit me. Thank God that retro is a fashion statement.

One of the things I've managed to fit into is my old Pea Coat from my time in the Navy. Now a Pea Coat or a Pea Jacket is spelled "p-e-a" ... but it doesn't have anything to do with green legumes - or green soup with ham in it.

Some of the etymologies claim it has to do with "pea soup" weather that ships often have to endure at sea - but that's not altogether true.

Rather it comes from a Dutch and Frisian term "*pjij-jacket*" or "*pjij-coat*" where "*pjij*" is a heavy felt material made of wool.

After discovering my pea coat, and that it now fit me ... my mother suggested that I should put my name in it - after all, I don't want to lose such a nice article of clothing.

But, interestingly enough, stenciled across the inside lining of my pea coat is my last name, serial number, and my boot camp unit. After all, everything that was issued to us in boot camp was marked with our name, serial number, and unit number.

Today is All Saint's Day - and this is a day ... not only for those saints who are canonized, or for those who have died and gone on to their eternal reward ... but also for those of us who are here ... fighting the good fight.

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar 8 Beatitudes ... sort of a rule-book for how we as saints of God are supposed to fight that good fight ... if you will, the 10 commandments for the citizens of the Kingdom of God.

The Old Testament 10 Commandments are all stated in the negative - "thou shalt not" ... "thou shalt not" ... while the 8 Beatitudes are stated in a more positive way - "blessed are those" ... "blessed are you" ...

And in the Epistle reading from St. John, he reminds his readers - and us as well - that we are called to be the children of God. And while we are children by adoption through Jesus Christ - John also tells us that at the end of time - “we shall be like him” and that “we shall see [God] as he is.”

And finally, we heard from St. John in the First Reading from the Book of Revelation ... where John gives us a glimpse of the heavenly liturgy ... the “Mass in heaven” ... and how an angel ‘marks’ those who are the “servants of God.”

In this sense, we are marked as God’s own ... God’s children ... God’s property ... God’s servants. We are marked through Faith and Baptism ... and so long as we keep up the relationship with our heavenly Father ... we remain his.

So, like my Pea Coat, and most of my gear from boot camp, we are “marked” as belonging to God.

In our own lives, we sometimes end up in situations where we’ve thought we ‘outgrew’ God ... or ‘grew out of’ our relationship with God. At first we might forget to pray ... and after a while praying becomes a chore. We spend less time with Scripture than we maybe should ... until what was once the familiar old Bible has a layer of dust on it. Left to our own devices, we can end up spending less and less time with the Lord. And the relationship suffers from neglect.

But no matter how we move through this life, God remains patient. He remembers that we are his; after all - we are marked as his own ... we remain his children.

One powerful way to keep God in our lives is to live the Beatitudes ... in our lives ... in our actions ... in our hearts.

As we approach this altar ... pray for an outpouring of grace to “fit God back in” ... back into the places we may have neglected to keep him in ... and invite him into the places where we maybe haven’t ever let him in. Let us accept our call as God’s children, and allow his grace to transform us into who it is that he created us to be ... then we can “fit back in” to our true call as the sons and daughters of God the Father, redeemed in Jesus Christ, and filled with the graces of the Holy Spirit.