

Part of my Naval aircrew training included an obstacle course. Besides the obvious things, like running on sand, monkey bars, diving face into sand, balancing on a beam, and the one thing that I couldn't do ... get over a 10' wall.

In all of the practice runs, I think I had maybe done it once, the other times, I'd push and pull and still I'd be hanging on the wrong side of the wall.

On the day of the final exam, I'd been practicing the things that I had problems with – running on sand, and pull-ups to get over the wall. When I got to the wall, I took a running leap, grabbed the top and pulled. But I hadn't gotten enough momentum to pull myself over.

Right when I was about to drop and go for another leap at it, I felt somebody or something pushing me from behind. I flipped over the wall and when I looked behind it, there was nobody there. I kept on and finished the course.

St. John, in the first reading, says,

*“this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us”*

That is, we are called to love, NOT because we are amazing repositories of love. NOT because we are the source of love. NOT because we're any good at loving.

Rather we are to love because God loved us first. We are to receive the love that God pours out on us, and return it to others ... in the same way that God does. Namely, without reservation.

I think the message here is one of “spiritual poverty.” This kind of poverty has nothing to do with starving people overseas. This sort of poverty is what we all have. None of us is the source of love. God is. None of us loves unconditionally, God does.

In the letter of St. James, it says, *“every good an perfect gift comes from God.”*

Our poverty is twofold – in that we have nothing good except what comes from God; and that we need to recognize this ... that is, recognize our neediness before God in all things ... and secondly, that what we need, God will gladly give us.

In the Gospel, the Apostles “intercede imperfectly” for the crowds. There ask Jesus to send them away. Don't we do that in difficult situations? “God get rid of this person!”

And despite the imperfection of their prayer, Jesus works a great miracle.

That is what is waiting for us – first that we recognize our need (or the need of others), then that we turn to God and ask to have this need taken care of. And finally, is the miracle – not always what we expected, but always a miracle.

Let us pray to recognize our neediness in all things. And instead of discouragement, let us turn to God in prayer and be willing ask for what we need. And then in gratitude, thank God for “every good an perfect gift” we have received from Him through His Son Jesus Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit.