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I truly contemplated whether or not to share this. I decided to NOT because I’m looking for pity, but because I really feel like it’s a good, authentic example. This fall has been rough. Really rough. Most of you know Kory, my husband, was in a car accident at the end of August wherein he sustained a broken hip. We are very lucky it was not much worse since he wasn’t wearing a seatbelt and he hit a tree head-on. The day after this happened I had been scheduled to have surgery myself. I’ve been dealing with an ulcer and a hiatal hernia for the last few years. Obviously my surgery had to be postponed. I ended up bring Kory home from the hospital with two plates, seven screws, a walker, hospital bed, raised toilet seat, a shower chair,… Good thing we had these things on hand for him as my mom’s health started to fail. She’s been living with us for the last several months because her arthritis was getting bad enough that it really wasn’t safe for her to live alone since she has a 2-story home. Mom + stairs= a bad combination! Her pain continued to escalate and her ability to get around declined, both very quickly. Regardless, we carried on! I finally had my surgery in mid-September. It went well except I somehow ended up being allergic to an antibiotic they gave me. (I’ve never had an allergy of any kind! Lethargy to redness to rash to being covered in blisters, 1 trip to Urgent Care, 1 to the doctor’s office, and 1 to ER…multiple steroids, Benadryl, and all is well again.) It ended up being a good thing Kory was home all the time because Mom’s health continued to plummet. She finally ended up having spinal surgery herself on Nov. 2. All of her vertebrae from C2 thru T1 were fused together. She’ll have to limit her stargazing from now on, but at least she can bear weight and is recuperating well at Mary Free Bed.

 Besides all of this, I also had poison ivy, my ulcer was bleeding so I had to start getting iron transfusions and we kicked off the new year of Faith Formation programming. Don’t forget there were a couple of kids to raise and their new school year! Did I mention that I’m also still catering? That I have been training a new office assistant? That our septic system gave out? That we let a homeless man live in our camper? See? I said it was a rough fall!

 So how did we survive all this chaos? One of my sisters was/is a Godsend! She helped/s so much! A few neighbors dropped off meals. I have a VERY understanding boss (don’t tell him I said anything nice about him) and very supportive and competent co-workers. A couple friends stepped in to help finish some projects Kory had started. But mostly, we leaned on God and we persevered.

 We were able to carry on because when we were confirmed, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were strengthened within us. With *wisdom* we were able to keep our priorities straight. We still prayed and went to church. We continued to show charity. *Understanding* allowed us to move beyond asking, “Why us?” The gift of *counsel* allowed us to be honest when completing insurance forms and making other moral decisions. *Fortitude* carried us through this chaotic time. It gave us the courage and strength to suffer patiently and endure our trials. Fortitude also helped us cope with poverty. (Let’s just say more than 1 bill has arrived on colored paper!?!) It is *knowledge* that helped us to try to understand God’s reason for why these circumstances befell us, and why all at the same time. *Piety* has allowed me to find comfort in coming to church and in caring for my mom. The *fear of the Lord* has continued to help me find joy in my work and in making time to come to Mass.

 Now, do NOT read this and think that there haven’t been times of frustration, self-pity, and confusion. Words haven’t always been the nicest and patience seems to have run dry most days. Know that there are usually dishes sitting in the sink and laundry needing to be done. I wouldn’t wish these series of events on anybody. But we have survived because of the gifts that were strengthened in us at our Confirmations. Come to Faith Formation classes to learn more about these gifts that you, too, have.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving,

 Julie Gould

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This Week:

* Sunday, Nov. 18, 4-6 pm at Fellowship Hall: Faith Formation classes for the whole family. A Family in Faith- please bring your books if you have them.
* Monday, Nov. 19, 7-8:30 pm at Fellowship Hall, Howard City : Adult Enrichment class