

It was quiet last night and for a few moments, I thought heard,
off in the distance, a terrible sound, that awful sound,
 “pa-rump-a-pum-pum... pa-rump-a-pum-pum...”
which can mean only one thing:
 the Little Drummer Boy is coming back again!
He’s going to “pa-rump-a-pum-pum” his way through our lives
for the next month or so!
Have you noticed over the last week or so
 an ever-increasing number of ads for jewelry stores
 on the radio, on TV and in the papers?
No mention of “the holidays” in these ads but we’re being primed,
we’re being set up for
 Christmas buying, Christmas spending, Christmas giving.
So it might be time to start making a Christmas gift list.
Time to remember who gave us presents last year;
 who expects a gift from us this year;
 is this a year to cut back on gifts?
 or a year to buy more gifts than ever before?
Both the reading from Deuteronomy and the gospel of Mark today
 raise the question of gift giving.
And in both scriptures it’s God who’s asking,
 “So, whatcha gonna give me?”
In fact God is someone who hands you a wish list
 just in case you’re not sure what he wants!
And here’s God’s wish list: God wants your love.
 God wants your heart and soul, your mind and your strength.
 God wants everything you have to give:
 God wants you!
And if you think that’s asking too much – get this!
 God also wants you to give your neighbor
 everything you wish your neighbor would give you!

God wants it all.
Of course, God doesn’t get it all because we don’t give it all.
We hold back – a lot.
We hold back from God; we hold back from our neighbor;
 and very often we even hold back from ourselves.

Given how much God asks and wants of us, one thing is sure:
 Every one of us always has something more to give
 to God and to our neighbor.

In the next month or so I’ll be moving from St. Elizabeth rectory in Acton,
 where I’ve been living for the past two years,

to our parish rectory across the street in Monument Square.
When I left Our Lady's rectory in West Concord in October 2004,
 I packed everything up and moved most of it to Monument Square
 and maybe about 20% of my stuff to Acton.
So here's the thing: for the past two years about 80% of my belongings
 have been sitting, packed in cartons.
For two years, most of what I own has been in storage.
How much do I really need things I haven't looked for,
 for over two years?
We all hold on to things we don't need.
We pack them away and keep them stored, for months and even years.
God wants everything of me,
 and I find it hard to let go of things I haven't used for two years.

Thanksgiving is around the corner and then Christmas is straight ahead.
Christmas: the season of giving...
Well, for Christians, every day is a day in the season of giving
 because not a day goes by that the Lord doesn't ask us
 to give just a little more; to give a little more freely;
 to unpack what we don't need and share with those who do;
 to give, and give, and give - at least until we feel the pinch.

We gather under the cross,
 the sign of how much Jesus was willing to give for us:
 he gave his love, his heart, his soul, his mind, his strength.
He was willing to give everything for us because he wants us so much.

And even today, he gives himself again in the Eucharist:
 he gives his body and blood as gifts for us,
teaching us how to give by giving us everything he has,
 teaching us to break our lives open and pour ourselves out
 in service of one another.

May the eucharist we celebrate and receive
 open our hearts to give more, and more freely,
 to our God and our neighbor.

Rev. Austin Fleming