

EXPLORE THE GOOD NEWS

HIDDEN GIFTS

Living the Good News
Day of Pentecost – B

Maria watched her father peel the charred skin away from the chili peppers he had roasted. He was making his special chiles rellenos (chilies stuffed with delicious melting cheese) for the family.

“I wish I was good at something,” Maria said, not even realizing she had spoken aloud.

“What do you mean, querida?” asked her father.

“You’re good at cooking. Mom’s good at computers. Even Teresa can play the piano, and she’s two years younger than I am.”

Maria’s father peeled another pepper before he answered. “You’re right—and you’re wrong.” He looked up and smiled when he saw Maria scowling at him. “I know, that sounds strange. But you’re right—I do like to cook, Mom is a computer whiz, and your sister plays piano beautifully. But you’re wrong, because you have gifts, too, Maria, special gifts all your own.”

“Like what?” asked Maria.

“Why don’t you try to find out?” her father said. “Go look for clues.”

Clues? Maria shook her head. Where was she supposed to find clues? She grabbed her jacket. “I’m going outside for a while.”

As soon as she closed the door to their apartment, she heard a whining sound. “Is that you, Bandit?” Bandit was the dog that lived next door. Maria had made friends with him the first day his family had moved in. Dogs always liked Maria.

Now Bandit was rubbing his paw against the hallway floor. Maria took the paw into her hand and talked gently while she examined it. “It’s a thorn, Bandit,” she said. “Hold still a minute.”

Maria gave a swift tug and pulled out the thorn. Bandit thumped his tail against the floor and licked Maria’s face.

“That feels better, doesn’t it, boy?” Maria hugged Bandit, then walked down the hall and out the front door.



Her sister Teresa was on the stoop, her hands shoved into her pockets and a scowl on her face.

"What's up, Teresa?" asked Maria.

"Mike's got a sore throat, and his mom says he has to stay inside, so I've got no one to play with. And there's nothing to do."

She's really feeling bored, Maria thought. But aloud she said, "Nothing to do! Why, this is a perfect time to practice Whackball!" Teresa grumbled, but her sister pulled her to her feet. "Come on, Teresa, get the ball."

Whackball was Maria's own game, played with a rubber ball against the building steps. There were points for smacking the ball over the steps, points for smacking the ball under your leg or over your shoulder and a lot of points for smacking the ball so that it hit each step just once.

Soon Teresa was trying hard to perfect a triple over-your-shoulder series of volleys. "Teresa, watch out!" Maria called, in mock alarm. The ball bounced off her head. "Aargh, I've had it! Send for the doctors!"



Maria flopped to the ground, doing her best to look seriously injured. Teresa giggled, and Maria sprang back to her feet. "Come on, let's go make a get-well card for Mike," she said.

"Will you help me write a message?" asked Teresa, as they walked inside. "I never get the spelling right, and your handwriting looks so much better anyway."

"Sure," said Maria. She found paper and crayons and sat down to help Teresa. They worked until their father called out, "Supper!"

"So," said her father, putting a big helping of stuffed chili on Maria's plate, "did you find any clues?"

Maria sat back and thought about her afternoon with Bandit and Teresa. Then she looked at her father and a slow smile spread over her face. "Yes," she said. "I did. I do have gifts all my own, don't I?"

What do you think?

- What gifts does Maria have? What clues can you find?
- What gifts do you have? What clues can you find?

God gives special gifts to everyone. What gifts are there in your group?

Try this "Gift Exchange." Directions:

- Write down three gifts you have. Look for clues in your life: What do you like to do? What are you pretty good at doing?
- Now pass your paper to the friend next to you. Each friend in the group can write down a gift he or she thinks you have.
- Write down your friends' gifts, too. Keep passing the papers until you get back your own.

Did anything on the paper surprise you?

Which gift do you like best? Why?

GIFT EXCHANGE