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A five-dollar bill in Pennsylvania – a miracle of 20th century



It was in the parish of perpetually-depressed Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a number of decades ago.

The colors of the land were washed out. The sky was drab with winter, even in spring, and the view from the parish rectory grimy, looking over the grey mountain-range and a tired horizon. Much of the area's industries were shuttered and moved. Alternating houses sat with their eyes boarded-up.

The priest stood outside his parish doors, looked down the street, over the horizon, and saw approaching him an old man wearing too-large trousers held up by rope, a plaid shirt, no coat against the chilly spring, and topped by a ridiculous, wide straw-hat.

The priest placed his hand in his pocket, pulling out the money he had—a twenty-dollar bill, a ten-dollar bill, and a five-dollar bill, deciding to give the man the five dollars.

When the ragged, straw-hatted man stopped at the priest's door step and exclaimed the bright morning, the priest offered him the green, five-dollar bill for breakfast.

But the man said, "No, Father, I came to give to you," pulling from his own ragged pocket a twenty-dollar bill, a ten-dollar bill, and a five-dollar bill, giving the priest his twenty-dollar bill for the parish.

The priest asked, "Where are you from?" The old man waved to the mountained horizon and the clouds, and gestured. "From up there," he said, jauntily walking on down the street, leaving the priest to feel the money in his hand.

Based on a true story told by a priest from Pennsylvania

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