God’s Favorite #2
By: Neil Simon
JOE

I’ll tell you something… There was a time in my life when the holes in my socks were so big, you could put them on from either end… I grew up in a tenement in New York. My mother, my father and eleven kids in one and a half rooms. We had two beds and a cot, you had to take a number off the wall to go to sleep… The clothes we wore were made out of rags my mother found in the street, or a pair of curtains somebody threw away… You know what it is for a young boy growing up in a tough neighborhood in East New York to wear *curtains?* Can you picture that? *Fairies* used to beat me up… And through all those freezing winters and hot, hungry summers, through all the years of scrimping and scrubbing, through sicknesses without doctors or medicines—one winter we all had the whooping cough at the same time, eleven kids throwing up simultaneously in one and a half \rooms—my mother nursed us on roller skates… through all the pain and heartache and suffering, she never complained or cried out against the world, because she knew it was God’s will. That was the lesson my mother taught us. “What God has given, God can take away. And for what God has given you, be thankful” … My mother never lived to enjoy my success … On the day I made my first million dollars, she died peacefully in her sleep on the BMT subway. Her last words to the conductor were “If God wanted me to live, I would have taken the bus today” … All I wanted for my wife and children was no to suffer the way I did as a child, not to be deprived of life’s barest necessities. But such riches, such wealth? I never asked for it, I never needed it. But when I ask myself, “Why so much? Why all this?” I hear the voice of my mother say, “It’s God’s will” … I give half of what I have every year to charity, and the next year I make twice as much. Wealth is as much a responsibility as poverty is a burden. I’ll accept whatever is given to me and ask for no more or no less … Can you understand this, David? Does anything I’ve said to you tonight make any sense at all? Where is you faith, David? Have I brought you up without faith, or have you just lost it? I would give away everything I have in this world if I could just hear you say, “Dear God in heaven, I believe in you.”