

The Work: August 11, 2025

Prompts:

Share a memory of being seven years old.

Use a place list for context.

Written: August 11, 2025, 4 p.m.

The Age of Reason?

By Mike Garofalo

The August summers in
East Los Angeles, shrouded in smog,
circa 1953... I was seven, in the second
grade at St. Alphonsus Catholic Grammar School.

American Bandstand singers and dancers delighted
us viewing on those tiny black and white TV screens.
We watched, we listened, we learned the music lyrics for
many rock-pop-country-blues-folk-hymns-soul songs.

I read books from the nearby local Bandini Branch of the County of Los Angeles Public Library System and from the much larger nearby East Los Angeles Branch Library, or the Montebello Branch Library. Reading great historians, thinkers, and natural scientists in library books gradually eroded, suddenly bulldozed, or from 1953-1963 eventually *d i s s o l v e d* my juvenile Catholic orthodoxy.

There was our very large white concrete St. Alphonsus Catholic Church on commercial Atlantic Blvd. Nearby were my white painted elementary school, Garfield High School, the East Los Angeles Branch Library, a County Park and Pool; and just three blocks south, the main commercial Whittier Blvd. My mind was shaped by this neighborhood space.



At the age of 7, they taught us in our Catholic church school that all boys and girls who have reached the age of 7 are assumed to be and have been ritually and/or legally, deemed to have reached the “Age of Reason.” Normal children at the age of 7 are responsible for and accountable for their own good and bad deeds. Normal children are

expected to know right from wrong, good from bad, and more worthwhile vs less worthwhile for their culture by the age of 7.

The Second Grade (Ages 7-8) was when the children were introduced to Catholic Rituals involving the use of the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. Now was the time for their first confession and their first holy communion.

Yes, I confessed my “sins:”
laziness, doubts, fantasizing, etc.
And, Yes, I *confessed* my “good deeds
achievements, positive results, etc.”
Father Priest was surprised.

Yes, I tasted the tasteless Host,
placed on my outstretched tongue,
chewed the Body of God,
swallowed a Wafer of Eternal Salvation.
I was, remember, 7... an Indoctrinated Believer.

I wore uniforms to Catholic School each day.
Nothing to say ... that was their way.

However, when they dressed me in
that White Communion Suit! NO!

I hated to wear that
Catholic Boy White Communion Suit.

Phony, Props, Uniform Advertising

I felt like a man holding an ad sign.

I felt like a clown in a circus act.

I felt like a bit-part actor in a school play.

I felt like a decoy, like a wooden fake duck.

I felt embarrassed, an alien, an outsider.

Yes, the boy in the white suit,

rebelled inside, objected, doubted...

until he gradually found better alternatives,

and got outta that family riled bee hive.

No more White Suits for me. I now prefer wearing a nice wool Pendelton northwest plaid shirt, a T shirt with a Buddhist art imprint, blue jeans, and walking boots.

Trivial matters??: White Suits, white shirt uniforms, white T shirts, white wind-breaker jackets, white hat, white school, church painted white, white Easter altar lilies, white carnations (*garofani*)!

Yes, slipped into becoming a lapsed Catholic at the age of 8, at the Dawn of the Real Age of Reason for me.

3. It led me to a more Pragmatic philosophy, and serious studies of Taoism, Buddhism, Yoga, Hinduism, Mystical, Greek-Roman, Taijiquan, and Neo-Pagan Druid and Wiccan theories, practices, ethics, historical contexts, rituals, body-care, social relations...

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Prompts:

Write a Poem with a Simple Premise

Written: August 11, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

2+2=4

By Mike Garofalo

A lady was studying her Bible
in a Cayucos cafe one foggy day.
We somehow struck up a conversation,
and she tried to show me The Way.
She believed every Bible Word she read,
and she said,
"If the Bible said, $2+2=5$;
I would believe that until I die."
I smiled; hid my contempt.
Then paid my cafe bill, and
counted out a four-dollar tip.
I headed out on the very long
Cayucous Pier to fish.

A fine cool fisherman's day ...
Luckily, I caught four fish,
Kept one Keeper!

With some guarded doubts and disbelief,
I don't believe in all that I or others think;
Fictions and fantasies for fun are fine,
But I prefer a factual ordinary useful mind.

The mathematician said the limit of $2=2$ is 4.

The statistician said the average of $2+2$ is 4.

The accountant said I'll make $2+2$ what you want it to be.

The child said $2+2$ does not equal 5.

Metaphors are symbols of equality, resemblance,
Similarity, connectedness, pretending play.