

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 19-20, 2021

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Remember chain emails? All of us have received them; our in-boxes were sometimes overflowing with them! In a chain email, someone sends you a story, tale, narrative or anecdote; generally with a patriotic, religious, or political theme. You are encouraged to send that email on to any number of individuals in your contact list under threat of some cataclysmic curse if you don't comply. I was recently reminded of the days before email, before the internet (it wasn't that long ago, was it?), when the hard-copy predecessor of chain emails made the rounds at the office. Those were the days, when entire forests were cut-down for the paper on which mountainous piles of these hard-copy, "chain letters" over-taxed inter-office mail systems.

As I was reflecting on the readings for today's Mass, one of those documents, in particular, came to mind. It was a graph on which the "age of a child" correlates to the "view" that a child has of his/her father...

During the first few years of a child's life, Dad is viewed as an almost God-like, omnipotent figure. As the child grows and enters school, reality sets-in and Dad slowly becomes a mere mortal, although still a powerful, commanding figure. However, by the time the child reaches the teenage years, Dad has lost that aura of invincibility: He has become down-right stupid, barely to be tolerated. Then, as the child matures, about the time that he goes away to college and sees that the world can be a very complicated and hazardous place, the realization sets-in that Dad isn't as stupid as he used to be. By the time the child is a young adult living on his/her own, Dad is once again **brilliant**, a source of wise counsel, someone whose advice is to be treasured.

Many of us are fortunate to have Dad, and his hard-earned wisdom, around for many years into our own adulthood; however, some of us don't get the benefit of that sage purveyor of insight and good judgment. My own father died just after I graduated from college, before Mary and I were married. However, I guess Mary and I did alright raising our children without the benefit of his counsel; I can't help but think that he would be very proud of his grandchildren.

But forgive me; I digress.

Mastery of the elements is evidence of God's power and omniscience in the Old Testament. This is conveyed as we heard in today's reading from Job with the words "here shall your proud waves be stilled" and in the second verse of the responsorial psalm—"He hushed the storm to a gentle breeze and the billows of the sea were stilled." In today's Gospel according to Mark, through this same action, His control of and calming of the wind and the sea, Jesus' divinity is made manifest to his disciples. However, due to their lack of faith, the disciples fail to see, here and repeatedly through the Gospels, that Jesus is the Son of God. They can only ask, "Who then is this whom even the wind and sea obey?"

The disciples' view, due to that lack of faith in Jesus, is similar to my earlier story on the perspective of the young school-age child who sees Dad as a commanding figure, but has no true appreciation for the real essence of the man himself. The disciples' fear of the storm on the Sea of Galilee and their prayerful call to a sleeping Jesus is also reminiscent of a young child who, fearful of the lightning and thunderstorm in the middle of the night, runs to the safety of her parents' bed. The child, just like the disciples, seeks comfort, reassurance and a safe-haven from a perilous world. That is among the gifts that parents, and we fathers in particular,

bring to our children: A blessed sense of love, comfort, reassurance and safety.

But as Dads, we sometimes become distracted and can fall short:

- We work long hours to provide for our families but, then, don't have time or energy to play catch or help with school projects.
- We sometimes are annoyed by our kid's music and ask them to wear head phones, shutting them out.
- We try to mold them into what **we** want them to be, not seeing their uniqueness, and failing to support **their** dreams.

Like it or not men, our actions speak volumes about us to our kids. They see everything we do, and what we don't do, and they learn from us. They will always love their mother, but they will want to be like you.

Fathers play an irreplaceable role in the lives of their children, and without a father's positive influence, the lives of many children are negatively affected. Just look around, look at a culture where so many homes are father-less. Look at how many children struggle without that father-figure. With so many contradictory messages in the world today, it's up to us, fathers, to live the Gospel message and serve, to our children, as a model of God's love, strength, and virtue. Here's how:

- The best way to love our children is to love, honor, and respect their mother.
- The best gift we can give our children is a sense of safety and security as they grow up.
- It is more important to:
 - Give them our time than our money.
 - Be respected by them, than to be liked by them, and
 - Encourage them in their interests, rather than require them to share in ours.
- And it is us, fathers, who need to teach, model, and live our Catholic faith fervently as the spiritual leaders of the home.

Just as mothers are the heart and love of the family, fathers are the spiritual leaders of the family, just as **Saint Joseph** was the spiritual leader of the Holy Family. The father who through his actions and example:

- Nourishes his children,
- Helps them to grow,
- Yet at times, disciplines his children, will ultimately form them into loving, compassionate and caring adults.

Fathers, you are the reflection of Christ to your children, **young and old**:

- Love them,
- Serve them well,
- Fulfill your responsibilities to your family.

After all, regardless of what we do in our professional lives, our most important legacy is our children. As Lou Holtz, former football coach of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, said at a commencement address at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio:

My greatest accomplishment is not football, TV or speaking; my greatest accomplishment is my family.

So Dads, watch your children grow into something great, great in the eyes of God, and then, in this life and in the next, you truly will be blessed.

Happy Father's Day!