

“Be a ‘Real’ Father”

12th Sunday of Ordinary Time [C]

Zec 12:10-11; Ps 63:2-6, 8-9; Gal 3:26-29; Lk 9:18-24

Well it’s Father’s Day and Dads you know what that means...

A couple hours from now you’ll be:

- Kicking back in the lawn chair, in the shade,
 - sipping some ice cold lemonade your daughter brought you...
- Surveying the freshly cut lawn that your son mowed...
 - the smell of grilled steak wafting thru the air as your lunch
 - is prepared for you...
- Your wife lovingly massaging your shoulders ...
 - tired from another long, hard week
 - bringing home the bacon for your family...
 - Ahh, the good life...

And if that’s you – Wake up! You fell asleep in Mass again!

(Hey, we’re all allowed to dream a little bit aren’t we..?)

At any rate, seriously:

Happy Father’s day to

- all you Dads out there, young & old
- special way to Fr. John -- and all priests (esp. parish priests)
 - Thank you for your priesthood, Father

Today I hope we all understand the *vocational* aspect of fatherhood.

- Often when we hear the word “vocation” we almost immediately think
 - of the priesthood or religious life.
 - But we ALL have at least one vocation
 - it’s just a matter of discerning which one (or ones)
 - Vocation is more than your occupation; it’s much deeper than that

- vocation is your *calling* in life, your duty
- a mission given you by God Almighty.
- So I encourage you to recognize your role of “father”
 - as one of your God-given callings in life
 - and treat it (as with all vocations) with the seriousness it commands.

Pope St. John XXIII once said:

- *“It’s easier for a father to have children*
 - *than for children to have a **real** father” (x2)*

The pope was saying there’s a very real difference between

- merely being a biological father
- and being a “real” father, a good father
- There may be no shortage of biological fathers in this world
 - but “real” fathers are indeed a precious commodity.

For the majority of us who honestly do try to be good fathers...

- Let’s take a few minutes to ponder:
 - What are some traits of a “real” father?
- As I was shopping for a card for my dad earlier this week
 - I noticed one that said:
 - Strength, wisdom & guidance make a Father
 - and Love is what makes him a Dad.
 - That’s a nice way to put it

So: Strength, Wisdom, Guidance, Love

and we could easily come up with other traits of real fathers:

- Discipline, Mercy, Protector, Teacher, Provider, etc.

That’s a lot to ask of someone – of an imperfect soul no less -- yet this is what we’re called to...

So today I'd like to offer you three bits of advice

- drawn from the life of Jesus Christ
- especially in the light of today's Gospel:

If you want to be a "real" father, I challenge you to imitate Jesus in these 3 ways:

- Be a Leader
- Be a Man of Prayer
- Be a Man of the cross

(BTW, this is good advice for anybody, anywhere. For Father's Day I tailor it to Dads, but this is for all of us.)

BE A LEADER

Volumes have been written on leadership, but let's boil it down to some basics:

Leaders have VISION, tend to think long-term, have an end-state in mind. They also INSPIRE, sharing their vision with others, galvanizing them to toward the same goal. And the best leaders tend to LEAD by EXAMPLE.

- Leaders may not have all the details of HOW
- but they do know WHAT and WHY.

Your family NEEDS your leadership. Managers are great, they help make the world go 'round, but your family NEEDS your leadership.

I don't need to tell you: our world, for all its wonder & beauty... can be pretty ugly.

Lately, I turn on the television and it takes me a moment

- to figure out if what I'm watching is real life
 - or a Saturday Night Live skit (sadly, it's real)
- The popular religion of Political Correctness continues to run roughshod
 - over anyone & anything that opposes its false god: Moral Relativism.
- Christianity and Political Correctness don't mesh too well
 - so the Anti-Christian sentiment grows bolder and louder:
 - peddled like a cheap drug on the streets of the uninformed...

- All w/o an ounce of shame, in fact with condescending arrogance.
- It's sobering!
 - When Jesus said, "*Behold I send you out as lambs amongst the wolves*" (Mt 10:16)
 - He wasn't joking!

Again, your family NEEDS your leadership!

You've got a LOT of competing voices out there – in our schools, throughout all forms of media. A lot of static. A lot of distractions.

If your children don't learn from you what their ultimate goal is and why they should try to walk a straight & narrow path to get there – odds are they'll end up lost.

- As much care and effort and diligence as we put into preparing our children for the next 80-90 years of life – and rightfully so –
 - how much care and effort and diligence do we put into preparing them
 - for eternity...?
- As Jesus so pointedly asks:
 - "*What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul?*" (Mt 16:26)
- This earthly life is NOT the end-all, it's really only the beginning...
 - Do you believe that?
 - If you do, do you share that vision with your children?

Be a leader: Point them in the right direction

- Instill that long-term vision, a beacon on the horizon to aim for.
- *Inspire* them -- and lead by example...
- Kids aren't dumb – they hear your words
 - and they watch your actions... they know the deal.
 - The old adage is true: Your actions *do* speak louder than words.
 - Is religion just for kids?
 - Does Confirmation = Graduation (finished with that Church thing)
 - Even if you're silent
 - your *actions are* speaking loudly & clearly...

Jesus was a LEADER

- Jesus shared His *vision* of the Kingdom of God
- He *inspired* – with His Love and Humility and Wisdom and Knowledge, motivating others to follow his lead.
- *Led by example* – he didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk. He called us to carry our cross and then picked up His own heavy cross and carried it
 - all the way to Calvary...

One more thing about leaders: the best Leaders are also good Followers...

- Who are you following?
 - Which brings me to my second point:

BE A MAN OF PRAYER – it's hard to follow someone you don't have good communication with...

Our gospel reading today began by stating:

- “Once when Jesus was praying by himself ...” (Lk 9:18)

We see today that just before Peter's momentous declaration

- that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus was praying.

In fact, throughout the whole of Luke's Gospel, Jesus is consistently portrayed as being immersed in prayer at key moments of his life & ministry:

- Immediately following his **baptism**, Jesus was praying when the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove (Lk 3:21-22)
- Jesus prayed all night long before **choosing** the 12 apostles (Lk 6:12-13)
- The **Transfiguration** of Christ happened while He was praying (Lk 9:28-30)
- The night before his **Passion**, Jesus prayed in great earnest in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:39-46)

Yes, Jesus *regularly* peeled away from the crowd for some solitary prayer, seeking the wisdom and direction of God the Father...

Which sort of begs the question:

- If Jesus prayed so often and so fervently (and He was God incarnate!) how much more should we be praying?
- St. Paul gives us his answer in his 1st letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thes 5:17)
 - “Pray w/o ceasing...”

Are you a man of prayer?

More often than not, we may have some general *sense* of God in our lives

- but we are not necessarily in communication with Him...
 - not spending much time in prayer, seeking direction.
- Is prayer a *priority*? Do you *make* time to withdraw
 - from the stresses & busyness of our lives to pray?
- I encourage you to come each Wednesday evening for Adoration.
 - Get some one-on-one time with our God
 - the very font of Wisdom & Strength, Mercy & Love
 - just waiting to be poured into your life
 - if only you will let Him....

BE A MAN OF THE CROSS

At the end of today’s Gospel, Jesus challenges us:

If anyone would follow Me, Jesus says:

“...he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Lk 9:23)

- Deny yourself – deny your earthly passions
- Pick up your cross DAILY and follow me
 - this is not a one-time thing – this is a daily, life-long calling...
- Jesus goes even further in Matthew’s Gospel saying
 - He who does *not* take up his cross and follow me
 - “... is not worthy of me.” (Mt 10:38)

Who among us here today would say we are not a follower of Christ?

Yet, if we on one hand claim to be a follower of Christ

- but on the other hand do not carry the crosses we have been given –
 - we're kidding ourselves...

St. John Vianney, patron saint of parish priests, had this to say about Jesus calling us to take up our cross. He said:

- *“There is no doubt about it: A person*
 - *who loves pleasure*
 - *who seeks comfort*
 - *who flies from anything that might spell suffering*
 - *who is over-anxious, who complains, who blames*
 - *and who becomes impatient at the least little thing which does not go his way –*
- *a person like that is a Christian only in name;*
 - *he is only a dishonor to his religion, for Jesus Christ has said so: Anyone who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross every day of his life, and follow me.”*

Those are strong words from a strong priest and saint!

We all have crosses to bear in life if we are to be a follower of Christ. The question is will we carry them or reject them?

SUMMARY

Fathers: embrace your fatherhood; embrace your vocation

- Imitate Jesus
 - Be a leader; Be a man of prayer; Be a man of the cross
- Incorporate these three things into your life and look out:
 - for you too will become the all too elusive: “real” father!

Happy Father's Day!