

Fathers Show us a Selfless Love

This week in our second reading, Paul writes to the Corinthians explaining to them that the Christian lives differently, saying "...those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5: 15). The Gospel that follows from Mark this weekend is the story of Jesus calming the storm at sea. He is asleep in the stern, the part of the boat that would likely be most dangerous, before the apostles wake Him. Jesus is completely calm; then when the disciples awake Him he quickly causes the storm to go away and the seas to become calm.

If you think about it, in so many ways our fathers show us what it means to live differently in a kind of selfless way, while also helping to calm the inevitable storms that come into our lives.

Every so often a friend of my dads who I've known since I was a kid will post pictures on Facebook he took from years ago. I have to admit it's fun to see my dad as a teenager and in his early 20s. These are often pictures of the two of them or other members of their circle of friends having fun with others, outside playing sports, at a concert, or having fun in summer.

One of my favorites though was moving day photos. This was the day that my parents, recently married, moved into our home in North Minneapolis where we lived until 1988. Though in the news for unfortunate reasons today, back then it was a great place to grow up. I'd ride my bike through the neighborhood, go up to the park, go up to a nearby bakery or up to the library with my mom. The house though needed a lot of work, though of course I didn't know it at the time.

The photo was taken just before I came into the world.

So why do those photos kind of stand out to me?

I guess because I see it kind of as this turning point in my dad's life. Rick, our family friend who took the pictures, took plenty of others after that and he and his wife Bridget would visit our house. But my earliest memories of my dad weren't of him being out with his friends or living the lifestyle of a single guy who might be gone every night doing something. Rather, I think of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:11: "When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things." Now this isn't to say marriage ends "fun time." I urge every married couple whose wedding I witness to take some time for themselves too; date night isn't a bad thing, nor is still being on a bowling league or having some personal hobbies. But the thing of it is our lives no longer center around these things as they so often do when we are younger. Suddenly a person, when married, starts living for the other person, and then as children enter the picture living for the family through quiet love and service. Ideally, there is a spiritual maturity. This takes work; indeed there are some "Peter Pans" out there who never seem to be able to grow up both married and single. But hopefully we all see growth with years.

More often than not though, it's our fathers who are of great help to us on this road to spiritual maturity by showing us what faith and love look like in action.

So as for the years that followed the photo, I can say that my dad, ever since I can first remember, is someone who has lived for Christ by loving God and his family. He and my mom taught me about our Catholic faith growing up as I learned my first prayers from them as a child. He showed me the importance of sacrifice and love of family as he worked so hard to support our family, was always around when I was a kid making time for me, and doing a lot for his own parents and his in-laws. He taught me patience over the years as I went through the inevitable ups and downs of growing up. And he also taught me how to believe in myself and to discover the gifts that God had given me. Day after day, he'd work hard at his job, come home and often do more things around the house, find time to play a game or go up to the park, and do it all again the next day. I continue to see this in him in how he lives out his faith every day.

Like Saint Joseph, patron of fathers, he has always led and been there with his love and let his actions do so much of the talking. In so many ways both he and my mom, like so many parents, have truly shown me what it means to live for Christ by growing in their faith and helping mine to grow too.

I also think of my dad when I think of the storms of life. I've been blessed in the sense that I've never had a huge crisis so to speak. But growing up, life surely brought some storms; losing someone close; thinking a situation might not get better; or having a hard time believing in myself. Even in priesthood, I've turned to him for advice when faced with tough situations. Whether it was riding a two-wheel bike, learning to swim, or struggling through parts of school and even discerning my future, through it all dad has been, like Jesus, that calm presence. I think he always knew things would be alright in my life because he has this deep faith in knowing who the captain of the ship is. And for that, I'm so grateful because I know together we are on that boat through life and Jesus will see us through.

On this Father's Day, a big "thank you" to our dads who do so much to reveal Jesus to us; to help us believe in ourselves and to grow; to help us learn how to love and live as a Christian. Never forget your words, your actions, and your love do so much to build us up and bring us closer to God.

I'd also like to express my thanks for being a spiritual father and the incredible support you, the parishioners, give me. I just celebrated 14 years as a priest back on May 26th, and have been blessed to be at Saint Joe's now for 6 years as of July 1st. Believe it or not, the term of a pastor is 6 years.

At the end of a term, a pastor can request an extension for another 6 years or a new assignment. Last fall when asked what I'd like to do for this year, without hesitation I requested a new term. If a pastor requests a new term, the archbishop wants to know if it really is a good fit for the parish that the pastor stay on, or if it's best he go to a new parish.

The archdiocese had several representatives meet with some parishioners to get feedback, and I was told those meetings went well. About a month ago I was sent a formal letter from the archbishop that I would be renewed as pastor for another 6 years.

I have to say it has been so great to be here at Saint Joe's. From the first weeks I was here I really felt "at home"; I've found people to be very supportive; very little in the way of "turf wars" or "cliques" that sometimes form in parishes with parishioners or staff; vibrant liturgies and a community that really comes together and says "what can we do for our parish." I'm so blessed to work too with a great team who comes up with great ideas, and who really comes together through good times and more challenging ones like we've had this past year with Covid. I often reflect on how blessed I am to be here at Saint Joe's and it is a true honor to serve as pastor, and I'm very happy to be staying here for another term. Thank you so much for your support.

God's blessings to you and have a wonderful week,

Fr. Paul