**Fathers Help the Seeds Turn into Trees**

In our Gospel this week, we hear Jesus tell a parable of the seeds scattered and sewn, and of the mustard seed that is at one point very tiny, but then becomes a large tree. The deeper meaning here is that we are much like the seeds, meant to grow over the course of a lifetime.

Seeds though need help to grow. They need sun, water, and often a person will prune the tree as it grows to keep it looking good. Over the course of our lives, if we are going to reach our potential too and grow into saints, we need a whole lot of help.

God of course plays the largest role. We can't save ourselves, and need His grace, His love, His Mercy. But, through our baptism, we also take on roles as leaders meant to help one another reach our potential as saints.

This weekend, we honor key people in our lives who help make that happen: our fathers.

Like most all of us, my earliest memories are of growing up in a loving home with two very dedicated parents.

Mom and Dad were married in 1976; I came along in 1977. We moved into a 3-bedroom home in North Minneapolis, and mom and dad worked hard to turn the house into a home. And it was a home filled with some great memories; of learning the faith; of learning what love looked like in action, and learning how to become a Christian through word and deed.

I think of the many little things that have helped me to learn the faith.

For one there is "faith in action." Both mom and dad worked hard around the house; and dad would work full time doing maintenance for the schools, and then often do things for his parents and his in-laws too. Eventually as I grew I'd take part in that too helping my grandparents as my parents did.

For another, there is time - such an important gift. Dad wasn't one to disappear in front of the TV after a long day. Typically he'd help mom with some things, and after dinner we'd go to the park and throw the ball around, or go sledding in the winter, or play some games together, firing up the Atari or electric football in the basement. No matter how busy he was, you'd never know it, because he always had time for me and the people in his life. Indeed in many ways he lived out daily Jesus' commandment to wash the feet of one another through all his actions. He's given me and the others in his life the important gift of time, just like a gardener helping the seeds to grow.

What I've also learned is dedication. When we want something in life, or feel called to something, one has to work at it. As my moral theology professor told us, when we said "yes" to priesthood, we also said yes to all that went with that - the studying, the prayer,

the papers, the helping in a parish, the growing as a person. The same is true for parenting. Dad when he became a dad was dedicated to it. He was there day in and day out to work hard, and do so much for me and our family. Never has he been “too busy” or needed time away. Rather he’s always been with the people he loves and done so much for them.

In addition, what I’ve learned is through the “quiet way” much like Saint Joseph, how one lives out their faith. Dad would pray with me, but he’d also pray additional prayers on his own. He was both Saint Mary and Saint Martha.

I’ve also learned what a difference one person can make for so many people, and that as a tree spreads it branches that cover different parts of the ground, so must our actions of love do for one another. Not only has my dad done so much for our family, I’ve seen his dedication as a husband; in his work helping the teachers and staff at the schools he’s served at, and to other parishioners in the parish we grew up at, Our Lady of Victory.

Dad’s also taught me patience. The mustard seeds don’t become a big tree overnight. I’m always amazed at how parents deal with kids as they grow. Dad never tried to force anything on me; rather he’d simply offer guidance and support, but knew I had to find my own way in life, which eventually led me to being ordained in 2007 and figuring out what God wanted me to do with my life. However, I’m still, as we all are, trying to grow stronger and become better - the tree needs constant care - and he is a big help in that.

In a nutshell, through what he’s done for me, my dad has shown me what I need to do to become a saint. It’s something I’m still working at, as is he, as are we all. But while I’ve learned a lot in seminary about theology, I’ve seen what I’ve learned in practice through the life of my dad.

I’m guessing you have a similar story about your dad too. They truly show us so much about life and where we are to go. Like Saint Joseph, patron of fathers, they often do this in a quiet way. But because of our fathers, we know so much about what really matters, and can see God and how to get to heaven a bit more clearly.

A very happy Father’s Day to all of our dads - and thank you so much for your vocation! Never forget the impact you have on your children and grandchildren. And for those of us who have lost a father, also never forget they continue to watch over you and pray for you on your journey, cheering you on to the finish line every day. What a blessing are our fathers, helping is so much on our journey to grow into saints.

God bless and have a great week,

Fr. Paul