



Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time June 20, 2010 C

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!

Today, we pause to give thanks for our fathers, living and deceased. As with Mother's Day, Father's Day is one of mixed emotions for many people. Ideally, all of us should, like Valerie Dillon in the reflection below, have positive feelings about our father. But in reality, that is not the way for lots of people. Many sons and daughters have a broken relationship with their father. Many boys and girls reach their adulthood with what psychologists call a "father-hunger" in their psyche. This means that they have never been validated, nurtured or affirmed by a father figure. Many men go on to be very good fathers and many women end up marrying a man who is not emotionally absent to them like their father. Others, sad to say, are not as fortunate.

Valerie Dillon reflects on what it means to be a good father

Valerie Dillon had a regular column in *Columbia*, the Knights of Columbus monthly magazine. In one of her columns, she wrote about her relationship with her own father and what a good father should be.

Never a Father's Day comes 'round that I don't think of my own father, gone from us for more than 20 years, but always fresh in my memories.

I think of him, sunburned and smiling, cigar in hand, sitting in a bleacher seat at Comiskey Park in Chicago. His passion—and mine—was the Chicago White Sox, and we were pals.

My dad was a gently, dignified man who never raised his voice, never criticized, always expected the best from me. He went to Mass with us every Sunday morning, which is not surprising—except he wasn't Catholic.

I guess my father's greatest gift to me was he loved me unconditionally. When I learned that he had died, unexpectedly, my first thought was: "In all my life, Dad never said one unkind or harsh word to me!" I know now that he was the person most responsible for helping me to believe in a loving God.

On Father's Day, I honor my dad and also all of those fathers who try so hard to be good to their children.

Once a man was a "good father" if he worked hard and provided well for his family. But, today, perhaps more than ever before, we realize how much children need their dads to be loving and involved fathers.

What can a father give to his sons and daughters to enrich their lives and cause them to bless and revere their dad?

There is time, given generously and graciously, even when other matters press him down. When a father takes time to listen to his kids, to laugh at their fifth grade jokes, to have fun with them, to be present for the important events in their lives—he communicates an unmistakable message: "You matter to me, I love you." Nothing says it better.

There is a willingness to share feelings.... So hard for men who were raised to think that being strong means never admitting fear, pain or weakness. Instead, children need to know their fathers as fully human, to see the vulnerable and tender side, to watch how dad handles hard times and hurts as well as success.

A good father has integrity. He keeps his word even—especially—to his kids and his wife. In a time when a sense of honor and responsibility seem in short supply, children need such a model.

A good father loves his kids' mother, and gives example to his sons what a loving man is like, while showing his daughters what they should expect in their own future. Even if the marriage is troubled or broken, such a father knows that "kids are non-divorceable." At the least, they need to see respect, gentleness and friendship between their parents.

A good father shares home responsibilities with his wife, who is probably also employed outside the home. This does not lessen his "dignity" or manhood, but shows a true spirit of partnership.

A sense of humor and a spirit of playfulness are wonderful traits in a father. If dad can laugh when the diaper is dirty or the car door is scratched...if he can enjoy having fun with his family, and see life's humorous side—he offers them memories for a lifetime.

If you would be a good father, it's impossible to overestimate the necessity of being a healthy person. Alcoholism, an inability to share feelings or to be

affectionate, an addiction to work or television, an explosive temper—all of these suggest emotional needs or problems that need to be addressed. No parent can give what he or she doesn't have.

A loving father does not live through his children. He does not expect to find his own identity nor sense of worth in what his children can accomplish, even as he takes pride in their good works. This allows him to be moderate in criticism and realistic in expectations.

A good father is a man of faith. He believes in a God of mercy and goodness. He is not embarrassed to talk about it, nor to show his dependence on God. He prays with his children day-by-day and, especially, in moments of crisis and loss. Such faith is a precious heritage to his children when lack of faith is everywhere.

Reflection questions:

- What speaks to you most in the above reflection?
- Do you have any unfinished business in your relationship with your father, whether he is living or deceased? If your answer is yes, what *one step* can you take to heal what is broken? How willing are you to take that step?

“I will pour out on the house of David...a spirit of grace and petition.”

Reflecting on the above verse from today's first reading, Alice Camille writes:

Today we observe two occasions that seem quite different: Father's Day and World Refugee Day. Both share an element: the obligation of the strong to protect and sustain the weak. A lot of folks are willing to shrug off that obligation and even to deny it. Which is why some children don't know their fathers and some nations are blanketed in refugee camps.

Real fathers deserve more than a joke card and a necktie to acknowledge their crucial contribution to family life. And activists who work to resolve the local problems that create waves of refugees could use the support of our political will, our dollars, and sometimes our willingness to accept a newcomer as our neighbor. The spirit of grace and petition in today's prophecy is greatly needed in both cases. Fathers not only need to be engaged in their families but they need the support of our prayers as they seek to do their job with integrity. Displaced people also count on our intercession, to God and our representatives, so that they too may enjoy the security of home.

Reflection question:

In your personal life, how do you seek to lighten the burden of those living in difficult situations?

PRAYER OF A FATHER

*Father, I really need someone to talk to.
You'll understand because you know
what it means to be a father.
Sometimes it seems to be more than I can handle.
I get nervous.*

*Help me to share so much love and hope and trust with
my children that they'll see beyond me to you, their
Heavenly Father.*

*This is quite a world in which to raise children.
It's full of perils and obstacles.
Show me how to guide them.*

*Give me wisdom so that I may be a strong father,
but not an autocrat; a loving father
but not an indulgent, spoiling one.*

*I know that ultimately they must grow
and make their own decisions.
But guide me in showing them how to
live with Jesus, your Son,
So that their every choice may be made
in his friendship.*

*And thanks, Father, for the gift of these children.
With your grace, I'll try to be the person that they
would like to be when they grow up.
Amen.*

Have a blessed week and a wonderful Father's Day,

Le Sarah