

Homily for 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Father's Day

“My father was a hero.” It is with these simple words that my cousin began his eulogy for my uncle. It was an impressive moment for me. My cousin carefully explained that my uncle had no great accomplishments save being a very fine and good father. His achievements lay in a collection of small and what might be construed as insignificant actions. But these actions taken together reveal a man who was a fine father, a wonderful example to his children, a loving husband and the strength of his family. My uncle was a hero because my uncle was a great Dad.

The example of my uncle and the story of my cousin's eulogy came to mind as I reflected on this Father's Day. Trust me. Preaching about mothers is fairly easy. Preaching about fathers is a greater challenge. A challenge not because they do less but because what they do often goes unnoticed, and sadly, unappreciated.

There is a wonderful story in the Gospel. Jesus needs to be alone. He goes off to pray. His disciples do what they always do...they go fishing. Now Scripture tells us that the sea grew violent and the disciples were being tossed about. And imbedded in this story is a simple line that portrays Jesus, standing on the shore, looking on at his disciples as they

struggled. In the distance, not seen by those in the boat yet totally concerned with their safety, Christ gives us a perfect image of what being a father is all about.

I think that fathers have it difficult because they are often the ones who stand in the distance. They are the ones who watch over their children even when their children are not aware of their concern. Fathers look on, wanting to protect their children and yet knowing that they cannot grow into maturity unless they learn to struggle and to grow on their own. A father's love is often a silent love....always present, most often hushed and in the background, yet never without total concern, care and inner strength. A father wants to be there when his children need help and yet he must be always willing to never interfere with their growth and maturity as they explore the world around them.

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is about planting mustard seeds, the tiniest of seeds, and watching them grow to become the largest of plants with branches so strong that the birds of the air can rest in them. A good father plants mustard seeds in the lives of his children. A father's patient and often overlooked love supplies to those planted seeds all the warmth and love that he can muster without hurting or impairing the growth of his children.

Let us be thankful for our fathers. May we never take them for granted. If you are fortunate enough to still have your father, take the time to thank him...today and every day. And if your father, like mine, is a memory that you treasure, then thank God who is Father of us all for having given each of us a person whom we were honored to call *my father*.