

Homily for 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Father's Day

My father was a very unique individual. He was a mixture of many different components. He was generous and tender. He was hard and difficult. He was also unafraid to enter into any situation or any discussion...even if it had nothing to do with him. And from that stemmed some very humorous situations.

I remember going to dinner with him one night at a local restaurant near his home. We were sitting in one booth and in the next booth was a group of women who were having a very animated discussion. I barely paid attention to it but my father must have followed it. When it was time for us to leave, we stood up and I started to turn to leave the restaurant. My father shocked me by turning not to the door, but to the women in the next booth. Uninvited, he said to them: "I agree completely with this woman. You should listen to her. The rest of you are wrong." I stood there in shock wanting to disappear into the floor boards. But he was like that all the time.

Whenever he would come to the parish to join me for dinner, I would suggest that he arrive around 4:00 PM. Of course, that meant he arrived around 2:00 PM. He was never concerned about distracting me from work. Instead he used the time to walk around and visit with every member of the staff. Once, while I was sitting at my desk and he was journeying through the first floor, I heard a great deal of commotion from one of the religious education programs. He had walked in on a religious education class and nobody, including the catechist, had the faintest idea of who he was. Both she and the students were terrified. She had her finger on her cell phone to call the police when I walked in and saved the day...well, at least saved my father.

I must admit that it was only in the last ten or fifteen years of my father's life that I learned to appreciate him more than I had at any other time in my life. What I learned in those final years of his life was how unique, how generous he was and how fragile he had become – a dim

reflection of the steadiness of my growing-up years. I bless the Lord for those final years and I regret that I hadn't acted sooner. Even more, upon reflection, I am in utter fear of how I would feel if those last years had not taken place and I had never appreciated him.

The readings today center on learning to perceive the blessings of life. In the first reading the prophet Nathan reminds King David that God has filled his life with blessings. David, who has taken these for granted, is chided to look at his life with more insight.

The Gospel tells the story of the woman who knew she squandered the blessings of her life and begs forgiveness. The Pharisees, however, are more like King David...they fail to grasp the blessedness of life and the magnitude of what this woman is doing. The Pharisees lack compassion and because of that they lack gratitude.

This weekend we celebrate Father's Day. We offer our fathers gratitude that should come from our hearts for our fathers are a gift to us. Fathers are strong, steady and faithful and devoted. They often make hard decisions and incredible sacrifices with great devotion and love. And they do all these things for us, their children, and their grand-children. Don't be like me and wait to the last years of your father's life to appreciate the good and wonderful things he has done. And please don't take your fathers for granted. Rather, take today and make it an expression of your gratitude and love that is not just for a 24 hour period...but is for every day of the year.