

[Readings: Ezekiel 17:22-24; Psalm 90; 2 Cor. 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34]

Recently, I came upon this reflection from Father Jonathan D. Kalisch, OP Director of Chaplains and Spiritual Development for the Knights of Columbus. I share this with you as we honor all fathers on this Father's Day weekend.

Every man -- even those who don't have children of their own -- is called to fatherhood. His fatherhood consists of nurturing the vocations of those for whom the Lord has given him care and responsibility. In his recent apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis highlights the central importance of the grace of discernment which "seeks a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has for each of us" (170). A father plays a key role in showing his children the love of God the Father, through which they experience, on a supernatural level, the knowledge of the unrepeatability of their own unique lives.

Before a man is ever a spouse or a father, he himself is first a beloved son of God the Father. Knowing that he is a beloved son of the Eternal Father gives a man ordered priority to his life and relationships: first God, then his spouse and, finally, his children. Pope Francis reminds us that God's unique plan for each of us "involves more than my earthly well-being, my satisfaction at having accomplished something useful, or even my desire for peace of mind. It has to do with the meaning of my life before the Father Who knows and loves me, with the real purpose of my life, which nobody knows better than He" (170).

Over the past several decades, for many reasons, men have been suffering an identity crisis. Whereas in former days, a son would clearly have grasped his father's instruction, "Show yourself a man," today such a curt instruction might not be so readily understood. The messages our culture broadcasts about what it means to be a "real man" are inconsistent and confusing. In movies and on television, images of men vary widely from violent, take-no-prisoner pseudo-superheroes, to smooth-talking, machismo-driven womanizers, to sheepish and vulnerable women-fearers who seem to want to be one of the girls more than one of the guys.

If you've ever tuned in to Family Guy or American Dad or Two and a Half Men, you know what I'm talking about. Today, men, in their role as husbands and fathers, are often portrayed as stupid, insensitive to their wives, and the worst possible role model for their children. These and other factors tend to make men feel powerless. Professional sports figures often leave men and boys empty of genuine role models, too.

Rare is the positive image of ordinary, hardworking men who are faithful to God, faithful to the Church, Faithful to their wives, and faithful to their families and friends. Thank you to those men in this parish who are such men. Thank you for your witness.

Within the Church, as well, it is not as easy as it once was for men and boys to find living examples of what it means to be a “man of God.” Does man’s God-given mission differ from woman’s, and if so, how? Are there any role models men can turn to in order to learn how to become the men their Father in heaven calls them to be? How can men today arm and defend themselves against the cultural phenomena that are weakening their identity and diverting them from their God-given tasks?

To read more about the challenges of forming Christian men today, check out Catholic Information Service’s Becoming a Real Man of God (#322), a part of the Building the Domestic Church Series, at kofc.org/cis.

Our readings today speak of planting seeds, protecting the crops and carefully yielding the harvest. What we say and what we do are like seeds planted in the hearts and minds and spirits of our children. Jesus makes it very clear that often times it’s the smallest things which make the biggest difference in our faith. The same can be said about parenting. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Your children will not only imitate you, but in many ways, they will grow up to be like you simply because you’re their parents. I cannot tell you how many times growing up as a kid and a teen, my mom looking at me with love and saying, “You’re just like your FATHER!” Or my dad saying, “You’re just like your MOTHER!”

We walk by faith and not by sight. Let us please our Heavenly Father whether we are at home or away, so that when we stand before His judgment seat, we may receive our recompense for our good parenting and not our bad. AMEN!