

Father's Day Talk



Hello, my name is Tad Schwartz

I have been asked by my good friend, Fr. Paulson, to talk about fatherhood. For full disclosure, I'm actually a member of St. Isidore parish. At one time, Fr. Paulson was our beloved pastor. When I asked him why he chose me to talk about fatherhood instead of someone from Christ the King, he explained that he was not looking for a perfect father and my name came to mind. Thank you Fr. Paulson.

Often when I hear talks like these, they are testimonials of people who through great faith have overcome tremendous challenges in their lives. I find them inspiring. I find them moving. I have none of that,... but I will tell you my observations of Fatherhood... of what a father does.

Fatherhood has been the defining moment in my life. There was the time before I was a father; and afterwards.

I remember shortly after I was married, my wife became pregnant. I was ecstatic and overjoyed. It was one of the best moments in my life. I always dreamed of being a father. Shortly thereafter, however, this joy was tempered by worries and concerns. You see, I am a physician and am all too well aware that not every pregnancy results in a healthy child. I began to pray. I mean, I really began to pray. I prayed like I never prayed before. I would stop by the church almost daily and pray "Dear God, please give us a health baby". Then I began to wonder, why should God listen to my prayers?. What made my prayers so special? Was I really in his good graces? Don't ask my why, but I hadn't been to confession in some time. I guess I had fooled myself into thinking it wasn't required anymore. Well, I looked it up and guess what? It is. I went to confession, which I now go to regularly, and prayed some more. After nine months a healthy baby boy, Trey, our oldest son, was born.

God is good.

I guess that's a father does, he prays.

With our first child we were very busy, slept deprived but it was manageable. Fifteen months and two days later our first daughter, Lauren, was born. Using a basketball analogy, we had to switch to man to man coverage. It was more of a challenge. Fifteen months and five days later our second daughter, Annie, was born. We had to switch from man to man to zone coverage. It was even more of a challenge. Our last child, Joey, was spaced out to ...fifteen months and 14 days. That right, we had 4 children under four years of age. It was chaos. Completely outnumbered, the best we could do was to

establish a perimeter of safety. Constant vigilance was required. Because as soon as you took your eyes off the toddlers the possibility of falling into the pool, getting into the knife drawer, finding the Drano under the sink or a million other lurking calamities awaited. Thankfully they survived.

God is good.

I guess that is what a father does, he protects.

Once a children came into my life, it is changed forever. The focus was no longer on me, but on my family. In sure Jesus was talking about fathers today when he said:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Our new charges had a cost. The things I had valued before such as free time and free cash flow disappeared. There was the cost of time....all of it. There was the cost of food, clothing, shelter orthodonture,.....college tuition. In an interesting way however, it gave a more noble purpose to my work. I found I was no longer working for myself, but family. Thankfully, I was able to do so.

God is good.

I guess that is what a fathers does, he provides.

Its is difficult for me to really describe the love I have for my children. It is a deep love. Its a profound love. It is certainly not a fickle sentiment. It a love that is suprising independent of their behavior. The snippy remark, the thoughtless gesture, the failure to display affection which has such sway in my other relationships, has very little influence in the love if feel toward my children. It is an unconditional love.

God is good.

I guess that is what a father does, he loves his children unconditionally.

No work of a father can be done without a mother. I am blessed to have a wife who works with me shoulder to shoulder as a partner. Although we work as a team, our contributions are different. A mother may excel at nurturing and providing a “soft place to land”. As a father, I hope I have showed them the value and example of hard work, discipline and self- sacrifice. Most importantly, I hope we have both provided them a living example of our faith.

I guess that is what a father does, he loves their mother.

God is good.

Being a Father has been a profound change in my life. Interestingly, one important way occurred while I was saying an "Our Father." I had said the prayer countless times before but I was struck by the fact that God chose to identify himself as "Our Father". It really resonated with me. I would never say that prayer the same way again because if in my own imperfect way I have devoted myself to being a good father by praying, protecting, providing and loving my children, how much more would a perfect God protect, provide and love me.

John 3:16-17 came to mind.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

I guess that what our heavenly Father does, he saves his children.

God is good.

God is very good.

Happy Father's Day