
HAPPY FATHERS' DAY!



Last month I wrote that the celebration of parents' days is a two-faceted feast, with Mothers' Day being one facet and Fathers' Day, the other. Still, they should not be separated but kept side by side. It is good on these two occasions to express our beloved parents all the gratitude we bear them. So, on behalf of the Church of Edmundston as on my own behalf, I want to tell all everywhere: "Happy Father's Day!"

DAD, YOU ARE ALWAYS SO AMAZING!

Dear Dad, it is now nearly sixteen years that you left us, at 81, the day after Christmas., 1986. WE had celebrated Christmas together, you had even attended Midnight Mass and had returned home still dazzled by the glory of the night. Christmas, along with New Year's Day, had always been one of your favourite holidays; they would bring back to your mind and heart so many of your departed loved ones.. You would quickly regain your composure, though, and the days would remain memorable to us all. You would even join in the festivities by learning new songs. I believe that this is how, at 70, you sang the then-popular Georges Dor song, "La Manic". Its composer would have been joyfully surprised! The great affection everyone had for you never surprised me, but I always was amazed at how you could take the time to listen, often till late in the night! You had your own life's principles, you knew how to join together wisdom, tenderness, and words of comfort. You were demanding of priests, of your own priest, for which I thank you. You often commented that there was not enough evangelization. According to you, there should have been a bit more fire and brimstone, and greater stress on the vigorous teachings of our predecessors! Even at 80, he still knew by heart all the answers to the old catechism, and in his daily prayer he recited each day the commandments of God and of the Church. He spent much time in prayer. Before the statue of the Sacred Heart he would spend much time conversing with Jesus about his family's joys and sorrows. The statue is now a precious keepsake of mine: it is filled with good and pious memories.

FATHERS WITH A THOUSAND FACES!

If I wrote of mothers with a thousand faces, I must also say the same of fathers. They have more than a thousand faces, actually! No two are alike! Each has a great value! The first to come to mind are the young fathers who recently showed me their babies: Simon, Rémi, André... But in my mind's eye I also see members of my family and the fathers in the diocese: Daniel, Pierre, Alain, François, Stéphane, Martin... There are others, those who are getting older and who now are parents of teenagers: Guy, Jean-Paul, Jean, Robert. Still others have now reached the third, fourth, or fifth generation... I hear Fr. Jacques Grand'Maison telling all those "hoppers" in life how our world needs such giants, such heralds of courage and hope. It is beautiful to see grandfathers awaiting the arrival of a new-born, grandson or granddaughter. The joy of the world sparkles in their eyes! In thinking of them all, the words of Robert Lebel come to mind: "Yes, I believe that love is greater than hatred. Yes, I believe that daylight is stronger than darkness. What would the heart of man be like, without the outbreak of dawn? What would tomorrow be? What would become of the heart of humans, without love and forgiveness? What would life be like? What would be the heart of humans without the hope of Easter? What would be death?" I think of fathers who are sick or who have been victims of serious accidents, of those fathers in the grip of poverty. Then there are those in the military, those who are labourers who must work away from home for long periods of time; and there are those in the grip of marriage and family problems which sap their morale and even their health. We talk about "absent dads"; a recent book has discussed the disastrous fallout of such "absences". I think of the fathers who have lost all interest or who seem disinterested in the moral and spiritual well-being of their children...

A PRAYER FOR OUR CHILDREN

Two parents, Jacques and Marie have composed a simple but real prayer: "Lord, you have given us the care of our children. We give you praise for the joys they have brought, for all the discoveries they have helped us make. Into your hands we commend them, Lord, as we did when we were expecting them, as we have not stopped doing ever since, each step they and we have taken together, each false step... We commend them to your care because we have learned (and they have understood us very well) that there is not very much that we can do for them except try to love them as you love them. Blessed are you for our mutual love, it is the most precious gift we have given them. It is perhaps easier to give than to receive. Make our love be availability, a discreet call or tactful response. We can do nothing without you: help us be, Father of all goodness, witnesses of your love to our children. To pray for them is also to ask for them. But what should we ask, O Lord, that is good for them? We well know that their welfare is not ours, they live and judge differently than we did at their age, they practically all seem to have turned away from you, but you alone know what is in their hearts. It is mostly for us that we pray: grace our sporadic patience with your inexhaustible patience; make us attentive to all that is good in them, so that we may learn to appreciate it and offer it to you. And in difficulties – because there and there will be some – in the suffering that will surely come to them, too, make us strong enough to always love them more and to recognise beyond the problem newly-made men and women, who will still always be our children."

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

May Fathers' Day like Mother's Day be every year a celebration of life! Parents are in the world and in a very special way a manifestation of God, a sign of His presence, a trace of His glory. This was what Saint Irenaeus of Lyons meant when he wrote that "The glory of God is man fully alive." To man and woman is given the great dignity whose roots are in the depths of the intimacy uniting them with their Creator: in man and woman there is found a reflection of the very reality of God who has created us in His image and likeness. Happy Fathers' Day!

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