



What Jesus Reveals about God the Father as a Model For All Dads and Future Dads

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Introduction on the Crisis of Fatherhood

- Present crisis shows a defect of spiritual fatherhood.
- Cardinal Ratzinger on the Crisis of Fatherhood (Palermo, 2000)
 - “The crisis of fatherhood we are living today is an element, perhaps the most important, threatening man in his humanity.”
 - “The dissolution of fatherhood,” flowing from reducing it merely to a biological phenomenon, leads to the “dissolution of what it means to be a son or daughter” and impedes our relationship to relate to God as he is and revealed himself.



Introduction on the Crisis of Fatherhood

- Elements of the Crisis
 - Radical Feminism's deconstruction of esteem for masculinity and for fatherhood. Fathers seem no longer necessary.
 - Present gender confusion
 - Consequences
 - Explosion of kids born out of wedlock (40% in 2014 compared to 6% in 1960; 53% for Hispanics; 71% for Blacks)
 - 43% of US children live without their father.
 - Effects of fatherlessness in much higher rates of youth violence, suspensions, crime, incarcerations, sexual abuse, neglect, drugs, suicides, homelessness, runaways, behavioral disorders, obesity, staying back, school dropouts, child poverty, promiscuity, teenage pregnancy.



Introduction on the Crisis of Fatherhood

- David Blankenhorn's description of contemporary imperfect versions of fatherhood
 - Old – Controlling, belt-wielding authoritarian
 - Unnecessary – Not needed as breadwinner, protector, educator
 - New – More mom than dad. Nothing mom can't provide.
 - Deadbeat – Irresponsible absence of paternal provision
 - Visiting – Part dad, part stranger. Supports, loves, but not around
 - Sperm – One act dad. Biological, but nothing more
 - Step – Commitment to mom, often weak bond to kids
 - Nearby guy – Friend of mom, but don't live with kids or mother
- Blankenhorn says that children and society need men to live with children and enter into alliance with mom, putting family first, and fulfilling four roles of providing, protecting, nurturing and mentoring



Jesus Reveals the Father and Fatherhood

- Pope Benedict, 2012 General Audience:
 - “Perhaps men today do not perceive the beauty, the grandeur and the profound consolation contained in the word ‘father; by which we may address God in prayer, because the father figure today is often not sufficiently present; and this presence is often not adequately positive in daily life. A father’s absence ... is a great problem of our time; and therefore, it becomes difficult to understand the profound significance of what it means to say that God is a Father to us.”
 - **“We can learn from Jesus Himself, and from His filial relationship with God, what being a ‘father’ truly means, and the true nature of the Father who is in heaven. Critics of religion have said that to speak of the ‘Father,’ of God, would be a projection of our human fathers onto heavenly realities. But the opposite is true: in the Gospel, Christ shows us who a father is and what a true father is like, so that we may sense what true fatherhood is, and also learn true fatherhood.”**



Jesus' Own "Fatherhood."

- Most often we are accustomed to understanding Christ according to his being the eternal Son of God.
- Many Patristic sources (Saints Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr, the Letter to Diognetus) looked at him as Son insofar as he is generated by the Father **and as father insofar as he generates eternal life in us through his passion, death and resurrection.**
- Jesus is the icon or image of the Father from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name (Eph 3:14-15).
- He is the New Adam, the father of a renewed humanity, transmitting to his children a new principle of life that transcends death.
- His fatherhood is virginal (eschatological) and spiritual (communicating fullness of God's spirit).



Jesus' Own "Fatherhood"

- Continues through the Church in priests ("fathers") and in all those who exercise spiritual fatherhood toward others.
- St. Paul tried to live this. His fatherhood is shown in bringing about the birth of Christ in others.
 - "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Gal 4:19).
 - "We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves. You are witnesses, and God as well, ... how, *like a father with his children*, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you" (1 Thess 2:7-10).
 - "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. *For though you have countless guides (pedagogues) in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel* (1 Cor 4:14-15). He was different than a pedagogue, an enslaved tutor who looked after external discipline; he saw himself as a generator of life within them.



How Jesus Reveals God the Father

- Jesus came to reveal God the Father.
- In addition to revealing him and his love through his body language, he also spoke constantly of him so that we might come to know the Father personally.
- Jesus teaches us to pray to the Father by his own example:
 - “Our Father, who art in heaven...”
 - “I rejoice, Father, Lord of heaven and earth...”
 - “Father, I thank you for having heard me...”
 - “Father, glorify your Son...”
 - “Father, may they be one...”
 - “Father, forgive them...”
 - “Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit.”



What Jesus revealed about God the Father by his Words

1. The Father takes delight in his children
 - “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased,” God the Father thunders at Jesus’ baptism (Mt 3:17).
 - Fathers must express their love for their children. This is obviously a key point and an underpinning for all paternal interactions.
2. The Father loves unconditionally
 - Jesus says the Father makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Mt 5:45).
 - The Father cares about every one, 100 out of 100: “So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Mt 18:14)



What Jesus revealed about God the Father by his Words

3. The Father is generous and responsible
 - “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Mt 6:26)
 - “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt 7:11)

4. The Father is observant
 - He sees what is done in secret and rewards (Mt 6:4).
 - He pays such good attention that he knows what is needed even before it is asked (Mt 6:8)



What Jesus revealed about God the Father by his Words

5. The Father is merciful
 - We see his nature in the parable of the prodigal son. (Lk 15)
 - Jesus calls all his followers to be merciful as the heavenly father is merciful, to forgive as the father forgives. (Lk 6:36)

6. The Father instructs those who are docile
 - “At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.’” (Mt 11:25-26)
 - “And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.’” (Mt 16:17)
 - “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father.” (Jn 6:44)



What Jesus revealed about God the Father by his Words

7. The Father disciplines

- We see throughout the Old Testament how God disciplines and instructs the Israelites.
- Drawing from these lessons, St. Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4)
- “And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? — ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.’ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:5-11)
- There is an obvious importance of our disciplining as fathers so that through us the Holy Spirit can form true disciples. We can’t have disciples without discipline/



What Jesus revealed about God the Father by his Words

8. The Father works

- “But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working still, and I am working.” (Jn 5:17)
- How important it is for fathers in general and spiritual fathers in particular to be hard workers!

9. The Father wants to share eternal life with his children

- “For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (Jn 6:40)



What Jesus revealed about God the Father by his Words

- Jesus himself showed these nine traits
- Jesus wants all men, called to grow in the image and likeness of God, called to “follow Jesus” to seek to emulate these qualities.
- We are called to:
 - Take delight
 - Love unconditionally
 - Be generous, giving ourselves
 - Observe providentially and gratefully
 - Be Merciful
 - Pass on wisdom
 - Discipline with and out of love
 - Work
 - Share life and spur others to eternity



Responding to the Crisis of Fatherhood

- Since “the crisis of fatherhood we are living today is an element, perhaps the most important, threatening man in his humanity,” we need to form people to be strong in the midst of that storm.
- This involves, among other things:
 - Learning from God the Father through Jesus. We are made in God’s image and likeness. Imitating his Fatherhood helps us to become fully who we are.
 - Modeling it for others so that people may follow our example.
 - Training the young to appreciate it, develop the virtues and exercise the responsibilities associated with it.



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Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.
Believe what you read.
Teach what you believe.
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,
Fr. Roger J. Landry

Most Recent Homilies

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- Following the Lead of the Precursor, Solemnity of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 2018
- Placing Our Heart and Treasure in God, 11th Friday (II), June 22, 2018
- Longing to See God's Face in Prayer and in Others, 10th Friday (II), June 15, 2018
- The Surpassing Righteousness of Christ-like Merciful Love, 10th Thursday (II), June 14, 2018
- Greatest in the Kingdom, 10th Wednesday (II), June 13, 2018

Most Recent Articles

- The Secular Push to Get Priests to Break the Seal, The Anchor, June 29, 2018
- Approaching the Suicide Surge with Honesty and Resolve, The Anchor, June 15, 2018
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