

HOMILY

Father's Day

Sunday, June 21, 2009
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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As someone has said, "Father's Day is like Mother's Day, except that the gift is cheaper." How true. But there are many great dads in our congregation and we want to acknowledge them. After all, it's not easy being a dad.

A woman wrote to a magazine to tell about an event that had occurred in her family when she was about eighteen months old. Her mother was out and her dad was in charge of her and her brother, who was four years older. Someone had given her a little tea set, so as dad was in the living room engrossed in the evening news and little brother was playing, the little girl brought her dad a little cup of make-believe tea which was just plain water. After several cups of this tea and lots of praise from dad for making such a yummy concoction, the little girl's mom came home. Her dad made mom wait in the living room to watch this eighteen-month-old bring him a cup of tea because it was "just the cutest thing!"

Her mom waited and, sure enough, the girl brought a cup of tea for her daddy. Mom watched dad drink his special tea then asked, "Did it ever occur to you that the only place the baby can reach to get the water for her tea is the toilet?"

YUCK! It's not easy being a dad.

Yes, it's not easy being a dad. But never before has it been more important that we have good dads. These are stressful times that require superlative parenting.

We need dads who are optimists. Dads are needed to take chances based upon the skills and knowledge they possess, whose purpose is to use those skills to teach the next generation. I thank God for all dads who, like trail blazers, offer this gift of confidence, a gift of conviction, a gift of risk and courage based on trust. It is a gift every child needs from someone.

In the context of the culture of his day, Jesus loved like a mother and taught like a father. He didn't have his disciples sit in a yeshiva learning Torah tidbits. Jesus took his disciples to "work" with him, to apprentice with him so they could learn by doing. Like all children, the disciples got it wrong a lot of the time.

Our Scripture lesson today from Mark's Gospel is one of those times. Jesus and his disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee when a violent squall comes up and waves are breaking over the boat so that the boat is filling up. While this is going on, Jesus is fast asleep, his head on a cushion. The frightened disciples wake Jesus up. "*Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?*" He woke up, rebuked the wind and quieted the sea. The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, "*Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?*"

Jesus is still in the business of calming storms. Storms come. They may not be in the form of a sudden, violent squall. Sometimes they come in the form of a phone call—from a doctor confirming a diagnosis, from a police officer telling you of an automobile accident. Storms come in many forms—a note from a spouse saying they're leaving, a pink slip from an employer, or the bad news that all your benefits have disappeared. Storms come, just as they came to those disciples on the Sea of Galilee.

Here's what's frustrating: sometimes when storms come, it seems as if God is asleep. "*Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?*" And sometimes when we are going through a crisis, it does seem that God doesn't hear or doesn't care.

In our story today, Jesus does stir from his slumber. He rebukes that wind and says to the waves, "*Quiet! Be still!*" When the wind dies down and is completely calm, he turns to his disciples and asks, "*Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?*"

I believe this is the crux of the lesson. We know that storms come. We believe that Jesus has the power to calm the storms, but we must not be afraid and make the connection to trust God's promises.

Jesus knew that his disciples were human beings, given to fear. He knew they were still growing in their faith. His retort seems harsh, but it is the harshness of a coach who wants his players to get the routine down precisely so that when they are tested, they will be able to respond as they were coached. Jesus wants to help us with our fear—for a greater tragedy than the storms that come into our lives is the inadequacy of the response that we make to those storms.

To cope with life when the storms blow, I have two simple suggestions:

First, make sure your relationships are strong...your family relationships, relations with your friends. It helps when you are going through a storm to have others there with you. You may not be blessed with a family, but you can build your relationships here in the church so that you will have people who will serve as your support group. Ask someone who has gone through the storm of an illness or the loss of a loved one whether close relationships make a difference. They truly do!

Secondly, take this time to decide what you believe and how you will live. What's so wrong with actually saying, "I will like a life of quality, trusting God's promises"? There are other ways to live that might bring us more sensual gratification and less sacrifices; but instead we believe that our lives have purpose and meaning, that a loving Creator has intended our lives for something special so that when the storms of life come, we respond reflexively with faith and not fear, just as a well-trained athlete responds in the contest as he or she has been coached.

There was a man in a community who was well known for his simple faith and great calm in the midst of many trials. Another man who had never met him but had heard of him came to visit one day. "I must find out the secret of his calm, happy life," he thought to himself. As he met him he said, "So you are the man of the great faith I've heard so much about."

"No," came the reply, "I am not the man with the great faith, but I am the man with the little faith in the great God."

