***Fathering Series***

**Matthew 3:17**

*“My Beloved Son”*

Mgrs. thanks

Good morning guys, my name is Ed Tonnessen. On behalf of MM, I want to thank the clergy for all that they do to facilitate our weekly discussions. I particularly want to thank Mgrs. for encouraging this 7 week series on Fathering, facilitated entirely by dads. However, truth is core members and clergy concluded that we didn’t have a clue about dealing with women; so we chickened out on a marriage series, and decided to offer this Fathering series instead!

Fathering Series goals

It is consistent with the mission of MM to try to help us with our **VOCATION**; to be better Catholic men, husbands and fathers. Prayer, formation, and service help each of us progress on our journey of faith. But most of us are usually eager for guidance and advice on how to deal with those daunting life skill challenges of marriage and parenting.

We all come from our parents. Few of us had any training or coaching for parenting. That is a remarkably sad situation, considering parenting is one of the most difficult, demanding but fulfilling vocations of our lives. If you are very lucky, and it’s very rare, you have or had wonderful parents to rely upon to help you parent. But most of us are relying on unproven, invalid, or wrong but well intentioned resources. Absent, weak, or ineffective dads are the single most impactful contributing factor in determining if children wind up in crime, substance abuse, sexual problems, and poverty. Dads need to appreciate their most critical role in developing their children; **OR** if we are “too busy” our children **will turn to the “world” in search of love**.

Consider the 40/40 condition:

* 40% of young men grow up in a household without a biological dad
* Another 40% don't have a healthy relationship with their dad

Further consider:

* Most men never grew up being given a definition of manhood
* Most don’t remember having been told by their fathers that they love them
* And combine that with society's confusing message on gender

**We have a crisis.**

Our goal is to provide Christ-centric, uncomplicated, proven suggestions to help you become a better father. In this series, we hope to share the following life experiences that we encounter in parenting:

* Love
* Challenges
* Support
* Forgiveness

My topic – My Beloved Son

***Matthew 3:17 - Behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased”.***

I hope we would all say we love our kids? If someone asked your kids; has your dad ever told you he loves you? Not “shown you by his efforts”. (elaborate on signs of love; you provide, nice things, great vacations, the club) What would they say? Have you ever told them, I love you publicly? These simple (but not little) things are the most impactful actions we can offer our kids. My material and discussion applies equally for daughters as well as sons. However, I will shade my comments more at sons since Jamie O’Rourke follows me next week focused on fathering daughters.

This is the scene, with scores of eyewitnesses, marking the presence of the Holy Trinity revealed in the baptism of Christ. It is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesies, John the Baptist’s evangelization, and is the anointing of Christ’s mission of salvation. Certainly it is one of the more powerful moments in the life of our Faith. Amazing how the Father chooses to anoint the Son; not with a victory in battle, a showy procession, the splendor of a castle, with worldly riches, but rather with the public affirmation of a father’s love for his child/son in the presence of others.

The most important is the coming of the Spirit of God upon Jesus. In Old Testament times we come across passages that describe scenes of “anointing.” Leaders were anointed with oil--kings, priests, prophets, judges. And with that anointing came divine empowerment to do the work set out before them. So today the church uses the expression “anointing” to refer to empowerment by the Holy Spirit. But in the New Testament that “anointing” comes when a person believes in Christ, or at the moment we call regeneration (such as in Baptism), and the Holy Spirit then dwells within our spirit, and our bodies become the temple of the Spirit. But what we have here in our passage is the reality of the Father’s **anointing** of the Son for the ministry that awaits Him. It was not just an anointing to preach, but for His whole life to make atonement for sin. Even Jesus needed that extra **divine** **empowerment** to do the will of the Father, and so the Spirit of God (the dove) descended on Him. By this, Heaven approved His commitment to do the will of God the Father and provided the power to fulfill it. Without the power of the Spirit of God, He would not have been able to fulfill the whole plan of God. I think it’s critical to recognize that the humanity of Christ was in need to be affirmed and encouraged.

So Matthew is showing that the King was here empowered by the Holy Spirit to deal with what was fundamentally wrong in the kingdom and to set it right. Jesus has the will to do it; and He now has the power. **That power is the Father’s love and approval of the Son**, the love is shown (Holy Spirit/dove), said out loud, and revealed publicly. ***Proverbs 17:6 “The glory of sons is their fathers”***; if your father’s praise is important to you, would it be any different for Jesus? This is unambiguous, but it doesn’t mean it’s still not misunderstood. Every son, every man, wants to know if he has “what it takes”, that he will or has become **a man**. Manhood/masculinity is bestowed. Our sons learn who or what he is from a man (hopefully his father) or in the company of other men. Or, most typically and sadly, he doesn’t and tries to find the answer in women, even other men, money, and power.

I am not a professional therapist, but I have learned that most children suffer from what is called a “father wound” (John Eldridge, Wild at Heart), a scar/wound (usually unintentional or collateral) received from their dads. By far the most common, painful, and debilitating is; men admitting that their fathers never/or rarely told them that they loved them or that their father’s didn’t affirm them as men. Most of these men are left with permanent scars, much more painful than divorce, death of parents, poverty, or illness. Some men overcompensate and become driven/violent men “acting macho”; or they become the passive retreating men that lack passion in their lives.

As fathers we need to make sure we anoint our sons with our love. I need to be clear, our kids won’t equate; working long hours, giving them lavish gifts, sending them to camps, a big house, cool cars, as loving them. They are desperate to know by hearing you tell them that you love them. I learned a great deal from Robert Lewis, the creator of Raising a Modern Day Knight. He concluded, and I have incorporated into my parenting (and so have many men here this morning), the following critical fathering responsibilities:

1. Tell them publicly that you love them
2. Identify things that they are good at
3. Tell them you are proud of them

Telling them that you love them doesn’t have to be a mushy embarrassing public spectacle. A hug, a signal that he understands (give my example), your presence for him amongst others. Don’t believe that it’s embarrassing; it’s the opposite, its empowering.

Not all kids can be sport stars, valedictorian, lead in the play, etc. But they all have talents and virtues we need to affirm. Humility, honor, courage, kindness, perseverance, wisdom, creativity. These sustain them for life, not golf scores or SATs.

Tell them that you love them always, recognize their strengths & virtues, and then make sure they know you are proud of them when they have really accomplished something, that they **“have what it takes”** to become a man someday or when the time comes, “that they are a man”!!

I would add that you have to do this OFTEN, so it sinks in and there can be no doubt.

* How many thousands of hours does a mom tell her child she loves them before the child tells her they love her?
* How many ways and how many times has God shown us that He loves us and we still don't get it? It takes many most of their lives before they can say, I love you Lord.

Many of us allow our wounds to be obstacles to our relationships with our own children. We need to admit to our wounds and **forgive our fathers** (dads don’t try to be bad dads). Most importantly simply know and let God love us, as we are. We must be careful to never communicate that our kids need to earn our love. Karl Rahner described grace as God’s personal-presence-in love to humans. Tom Groome adds, “Grace is the Spirit lovingly at work in our lives, **empowering** our own best efforts” Gods’ love is gratuitous love, it’s free. **John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”**. That model of love is what we must try offer to and **empower** our children.

This isn’t all there is to fathering but it is the critical foundation. Finally, as the late John Ream of Effective Fathers Ministry told us when he was at St. Mary’s (inspiration for MM), we have to provide our children with a strategic road map for life and model what it means to be a Christian man in the world, and better yet in partnership with our wives. That is a topic for another time.

Let me share questions for discussion…

**Mt 3:17 My Beloved Son**

9/15/12

Questions:

1. Did your father tell you that he loved you? Often enough? Ever in public?
2. Do you have a severe father wound? What do you wish you heard from your dad but never did? Have you forgiven your father?
3. Are you fathering like your dad, how are you different?
4. How often do you say, “I love you”? Is it difficult for you? Why or why not? What would help you affirm them publicly? Do you think it is too late to start?
5. Have you recognized your child’s special talents and publicly commended them and told them you are proud of them?
6. Would you consider asking your children if they “know” you love them and are proud of them?