

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

## REAL FATHERS...

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the first Mass of a very fine priest, Father John Paul Obaieri. Father John Paul, who is originally from Nigeria, is from the Brooklyn Diocese—a foreigner! Actually, he came to Saint Charles last year to preach at Masses during Vocation Sunday and did a very fine job. He extended an invitation for me to attend his first Mass over at Our Lady of Victory Church in downtown Brooklyn.

The first Mass of a newly ordained priest is for me always an impressive experience and also like a “shot in the arm” spiritually speaking for all of us clergy! The homily at the Mass was not preached by Father John Paul but rather by one of his priest friends, Father Lawrence. The priest reminded the congregation of the title that is given to priests. That title is of course, “Father.” He stated that this title was an important and defining one for the new priest.

No longer would he be known just by his name “John Paul.” Rather, his name would be prefaced by that descriptive and significant title of “Father.” He went on to tell us how it felt really a bit strange when shortly after ordination, his own father addressed him by that title “Father” and asked for his blessing! Well, we might say that although the priest is not a physical Father, he is a spiritual Father and that his “Children” are the people of God that he is called to lead and serve.

Today we celebrate Father’s Day. It is a day we think about our dads and how much they have done for us through the years. We call them “Fathers” because they generated life for us. Most of us think of our fathers as the “breadwinners.” Certainly they worked long hours at tough jobs so that we could enjoy the basic necessities of this life.

However, more important than just providing a roof over our heads, our dads assisted us in so many ways growing up that it would be hard to number them. Every time I pass Bennet’s Bicycle Shop on Jewett Avenue, I think of my dad who bought my first bike there with training wheels! He taught me to ride and was infinitely patient, not only with me but also my brothers and sister. I miss him every single day.

Today in our contemporary society, we need “real” fathers who are mature, self-sacrificing men who can assist their children and affirm them in positive ways. We are suffering from a symptom of vanishing manhood in America. While many men can become fathers in the physical sense, there are few that can measure up to that important title because they lack the maturity and the ability to sacrifice for others.

For instance, many men today “cop out” of their commitments in marriage and family life. They have to do their own thing! But true holiness does not mean “doing your own thing” but God’s thing! It’s the same with us priests, the spiritual fathers as well. The road is not always easy, but we stand by the promises we made to God for the sake of the wider family which is the Church.

It’s easier for all of us, spiritual fathers and fathers of the families, when we recall that we have a “Father in Heaven.” After all, Jesus himself taught us to call God “Our Father.” This was a title so familiar that most of the Lord’s contemporaries were scandalized by it. Yes, Our Father in Heaven is always there for us! On this special day in honor of all fathers, may we pray to the Heavenly Father to bless them always!

Sincerely in Christ,  
Father Jerome