

A Mother's Praise of Fatherhood

In ancient times, mothers were considered to be the very habitat of life, the place itself of nurture and growth. Indeed, from a child's conception, his mother's body is exactly that; and after birth, the mother continues to make the home, cultivate her child, and be the place of his well-being. Much has been said in praise of motherhood, for – whether we express it or not – we all know our moms have done far more for us than we could ever repay. Count on it, that any red-blooded man would deck you for insulting his mother.

But what of fathers?

What of that man who disciplined us when he got home, upon our dear mother's orders? What of him who smelled not of floral perfume and baking bread, but of sawdust or sweat or something like stale office air? He was not quite soft enough to cuddle maternally, nor culinary enough to give us more than a bagel and coke when Mom was gone.

The ancients knew better than to expect the father to usurp the sacred order of motherhood. But they also knew better than to belittle the divine role of fatherhood.

The father, they said, was the source of life. If the mother were the habitat, the father was *the origin himself*. At the risk of being unseemly, it is a universal truth that Woman alone can produce nothing but lifeless blood every month, which is the Rule of Women. Blood is a thing we see otherwise only in war, or in the slaughter of animals... it is a sign of the death, which we must bear with us always upon this fallen earth. Indeed, God Himself has said, "the life is in the blood" (Leviticus 17), and wherever we see the blood separated from the body, death has reigned.

But for the father.

When Woman is joined with Man, *who is the source of life*, **new life is made**. The tide of death is stemmed, and the reversal of death is accomplished.

How very Christian.

We, who are fallen humanity, could not but despair in our deadness, our fruitlessness, the blood of the Rule of Women... but for the redemption which our Bridegroom has wrought. The True Man has come to us, His beloved Church, as a man to his bride, to bring **life** to what was once the house of death. In the pouring out of His own blood, He has undone the outpouring of ours. Receiving *His* Body and Blood upon the altar, we are united to Christ in eternal marriage, and through this union have **everlasting life**.

And more than that (as we learn in Paul's letter to the Ephesians), the marital union which is made in this *giving of life* is completed in the *eternal act of sacrifice*. The father is not simply the *origin of life*, but the *sustainer* and *protector* of it, to the point of *sacrificing himself for the one he loves, for the one to whom he has given his life*. This is an utterly selfless love, an awesome and heartrending love. Without it, neither mother nor child, home nor growth, hope nor anything at all, would exist.

But how many of us memorize the first article of the creed and still go about our lives taking utterly for granted our "clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home," etc., etc.? And yet, despite our daily ingratitude, our heavenly Father does not cease to give us His bounty, sustain our life, and bless us with all good things? In like fashion, who among us has thought to thank dear ol' Dad for the electricity his paycheck provides, the groceries he bought on the way home, or even the good name he has made for our family? And yet, without grudge or bitterness, he daily sacrifices himself to provide all good things for those he loves, for those to whom he *gives his life*.

Although the Church does not recognize secular holidays, it was a truism in the Early Church that "to the holy, all things are holy." Therefore, when the secular world celebrates Father's Day this month, let us who have been made holy truly ponder the holiness of fatherhood. Let us thank our Father in heaven for giving and sustaining our life, let us praise the True Man for sacrificing His life for ours, and let us smother our earthly fathers with gratitude for embodying that divine role in our own life.

Go give your dad a hug.