

12TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME “A” 2020

Recently I read about some first graders who were asked to draw a picture of God in their Sunday school class. Their finished products contained some interesting theology. One child depicted God in the form of a brightly colored rainbow. Another presented God as an old man, coming out of the clouds. A lively little boy drew God with a remarkable resemblance to Superman. The best entry, however, came from a little girl. She said, *“I didn’t know what God looked like, so I just drew a picture of my daddy.”*

What lovely words. It is our most fervent prayer, when our young people look at their Dads, they do see God’s love, strength and consistency reflected in them.

We know that dads are not perfect. No human is. But we also know that most dads are wonderful men trying to do their very best to live the kind of love that Jesus spoke about in today’s Gospel: *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”* Jesus is saying that God’s knowledge of each of us is so extensive, or should we say intensive, that God knows every hair on our head. That’s an amazing love! And most dads are doing their very best to demonstrate this kind of love to their families.

I often tell young people that outside of God, no one will love you more in this world than your dad and mom. Not even your future husband or wife will love you in the same, unconditional way that your parents do. Parents will love their kids a lifetime with very little in return from their kids.

So, kids, cut your parents some slack when they are not perfect in every way. And better, express to your parents—in particular your dads whom we honor today—your incredible gratitude and love for them for all they do for you.

And, dads, I want to encourage you with all my heart. It's not hard to see that the root of so many problems, discontent, violence and dysfunction is the direct result of not having good fathers in the home who care for, love, guide, and protect their children.

I also want to encourage, you dads, because your vocation is not an easy one. I know there are a lot of societal pressures pushing against you when you strive to be a really good father. And your children often will push against you. But, despite the push back and the attacks, I want you to know what your kids really want.

Recently I read the results of a survey that a Catholic priest took with a large group of high school students. He asked the students what makes a good dad? Here are some of their responses:

- A good father acts *his* age, not his child's age
- A good father is a parent first, and a friend second.
- A good father isn't afraid to discipline his children; however he disciplines them with love.
- A good father sets a good example for his children.
- A good father helps his children to understand "*why?*"
- A good father does not live by the saying, "*Do as I say, not as I do*"
- A good father gives his children the positive reinforcement they need
- A good father trusts his children, but also verifies that they've been honest with him.

- A good father is not afraid to say “*No.*”
- A good father takes an active role in his children’s education—and in their spiritual upbringing.
- A good father doesn’t put his own children down by comparing them to other children
- A good father allows his children to experience the consequences of their negative actions. He doesn’t always try to “*bail them out*” of trouble
- A good father tries to keep his children from growing up too fast
- A good father doesn’t give his children everything they want
- A good father is consistent
- A good father stands by his decisions
- A good father doesn’t try to live his life vicariously through his children
- A good father makes his children earn their privileges
- A good father speaks the truth to his children, whether they want to hear it or not

I hope you dads are touched and inspired by those qualities I just read to you because this is what young people are saying: they need you dads to strive to imitate our Heavenly Father—to strive to be as good and loving and good as God the Father is. Now there is no way you can be perfect like God. But all fathers can strive each day to be better than they are right now!

So today let’s ask God, the Father of all, through Jesus Christ, His Son, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to give our dads

the grace that they need to move a little bit closer to perfection, a little bit closer to the perfect fatherly ideal that our children are looking for in *YOU*.