

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE PENTECOST

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The World says it is Father's Day today. The Church knows it is our weekly celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are looking for good news. But Since I was not here on the Sunday that the world celebrates as Mother's Day, I was not able to share with you lots of good natured RIBBING, if you will, about men. In view of that it seems I have a lot to say today.

Let's see what good news scripture and the observation of our own humanity tell us about who God is, and what an earthly man, father, husband is to be, in His image.

Lord Heavenly Father, bless us this day as we hear your intention for us all in your family; let thy kingdom come and thy will be done. Amen.

If we set aside the Ezekiel reading just for a moment, and return to the Old Testament from last week, then we are in the Garden of Eden, and the beginnings of the purest of interactions between man and woman. And how it all fell apart. Somewhere in between we hope always to be able to sort out the purpose, and identity and roles intended by God in creation.

in Genesis chapter 2 and 3, we hear the details of the story of the connection and interaction between Adam and Eve. we hear also the details of their demise in perfection, and the reason that life is no longer a rose garden.

Let's take a few steps back into the intentions and consequences of their creation. We hear that the man is the first one out to face the God's creation, and the one called to be a faithful steward to make sure God's world is taken care of. This of course indicates God's willingness to trust and rely on this new order of creation. As man is given his orders from God the creator as steward, man sees the big picture of caring for and providing security for God's world. Caring for and providing security. Now that right there says much about fatherhood, and what it means from scripture to be a man, even if never a father.

The woman is the second to appear, and seeing man, realizes the need for ..... interaction. It seems that Right from the beginning, it is in her nature. And Every relationship she has will benefit when she nurtures it without hesitation.

So, the woman, by her nature, will nurture relationships. And, rightly so, the Church, the Body of Christ, needs her essential nurturing.

The man now sees in this woman a part of God's creation that is under his stewardship, one though that is intimately a part of him, and so he will especially provide stability and security for this helpmate. And now we see even more clearly the man's nature.

When it goes right, For the man, the husband, the father, the Godly man in the Church, each beneficiary, – wife, children, friends, the Body of Christ will be more secure in themselves, confident and affirmed in who they are and what they become. This happens when the man chooses to give of himself courageously to provide a security of life, even to the sacrifice of his

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own well being in order to faithfully secure life for those others. This is a priority for the man of God, and among God's people!

Of course, when that man is not acting in such a way, giving of himself, then those relationships, all of them, including the life of the Church, will also suffer, and be so much less than they might otherwise have been, often terribly so. A tragic consequence and one of the reasons Churches close, is because of the absence of Godly men, even when they are in fact filling the pew. There is no singular blame here. It is simply a strong word of exhortation to rise up and be - along with God himself - the security and stability of the Church and its mission.

We hear what happens wrong in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Pharaoh of Egypt, and all of Egypt were going to be cut down, just like Ezekiel says happened to the cedars of Lebanon. They – strong as they were created to be – got too big for their britches, so to speak. Pride and arrogance and idolatry took them down. Thinking that it was all about them, rather than God himself. Read all of Ezekiel 31 and you will find the reference to even the trees of the Garden of Eden being felled, when Adam was cast out of the garden along with Eve – they took pride in their own strength and wisdom. And all of a sudden, the right relationship with God was gone. And so were they.

And now to be what men need to be, it calls for self-sacrifice, rather than ease of walking in God's garden. For both husband and wife, and mother and father, man and woman, when they give of themselves they are doing the necessary Godly inherent-in-creation thing: but now, the woman must work to the bone to maintain the necessary relationships; the man must pay 'til it hurts to make sure the other person is on the right foundation.

Paul would say that even though all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body. Still, the power of the sacrifice of Christ gives us a new chance, a new hope, so that whether we are here or with him in eternity, we again have the opportunity to please him, and that is what we make our aim, so different than Lebanon, or Pharaoh, or even Adam.

When Jesus told of sowing seed, he gave encouragement in the same way, letting all men know that by starting in the right way, starting with such a small thing, and keeping our eyes on Jesus, we will grow to be huge trees that will not be destroyed, but actually be showing worth, by self-giving as the protector of home and family and Church.

That's what men are to do. That's why when men are at a restaurant and one of them decides to pay for the rest, the rest let him do it, because it is part of what a man does to show his own worth and to give value to the others with him.

Women bring calculators to a women's lunch in order to assure that all relationships are equal and no one woman shoulders the demands of relationship more than any other. Besides how long it takes, it actually is a sign of love for each other.

Let's just see how that plays out a little.

Men, especially on a first date, pay for the meal. Do not accept any offer to pay for you. I don't care what she is thinking about why SHE thinks she wants to pay..... You are the man. She is the woman. Her **presence and radiance** are payment enough on the first date. In fact, it is payment enough on the first several dates (if not all dates).

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This is called Leadership. It is what men have in them, whether fathers or not, as a natural I would say God given character. And it is what women, in general, are looking for from the man with whom they are interested in establishing a relationship. And as most of us should know at this point, it is the relationship that women want to have and nurture. This is why some women will want to pay for dinner. They may feel that this is what they have to do to establish a relationship with you, good looking, confident man that you are. Men, however, don't pay for the meal to particularly establish anything. They pay to prove their worth, and that they are worth the appreciation of the woman sitting across from them.

I know --- with the act of paying, it sounds to you women like the men are saying they want to establish a relationship, and you are right, but don't tell them that. They'll just deny it, and reply that this is just what guys are supposed to do – and they'd be right. And they would be masculine in saying so. In fact, it is quite a manly act to take that wallet out of the back pocket and put the credit card down on the table.

Women will pay- they will take out their credit card. But being the relationship wizards that they are, they will know that THEY just did the masculine act, and somehow, at some point they will eventually let that poor, unsuspecting, ignorant-about-relationship guy know – usually as a salvo point in some hot argument – that SHE has to do WAY more than HE does with the house, the kids, the bills, their relationship, -- hear her say she is having to take the LEAD and PROVIDE and maintain the SECURITY of their lives instead of HIM AND take care of all the inter-relationships-- and the proof in illustration will be when she shares the moment SHE had to do the masculine thing because HE didn't take care of her by not paying for that meal on their 2<sup>nd</sup> date.

Now I need to say this. In that paragraph I just spoke to you are several unspoken feelings that got said in the wrong way to each other. So, allow me to be brief for solution: Men, you need to learn to share your feelings to provide security; women, be just as forthcoming with your feelings, but not to repair the relationship by complaint, but to strengthen it by nurturing what you see is going right.

Just one more thing for men. It would seem that to be true to God's understanding of getting the attention of men, I would need to repeat everything I just said. It would seem this is evident as God had to say, Abraham, Abraham!! Or Moses, Moses, or Samuel, Samuel!

A husband was trying to prove to his wife that women talk more than men. He showed her a study which indicated that men use about 10,000 words per day, whereas women use 20,000 words per day.

His wife thought about this for a while. She then told her husband that women use twice as many words as men because they have to repeat everything they say. Her husband looked stunned. He said "What?"

Finally, I do have 1 thing that women need to understand about themselves for their own self-improvement.

And the first and greatest thing that women need learn to do better is [*silence for about 10 to 15 seconds*]....

Hey. I'm not crazy enough to start an argument with all the women of this parish.

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In arguments a woman has the last word. Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.

And then I'd have to wade through how many times an offended woman in the parish, instead of just being direct in argument, would reply to the question, "What's bothering you?", she would say, "Oh..., nothing." And I know darn well that "Oh, nothing," has an entirely different meaning in woman-language than it does in man-language.

Quickly Back to the point....., Leadership in men by god's design means showing that God is the first cause of all things. Because God did the creating, and holy men give credit where credit is due, it is thus a God-given natural inclination in creation. And it is in this kind of rightly built leadership that men speak strength, capability, reliability, and what seems to be a bedrock creation issue, the pledge of security of relationship.

Of course, fathers mean children. By paying attention to young people, you show that you value them. And Research shows the more young people are valued and feel valuable, the more likely they are to grow up healthy and avoid risky behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug use, violence, pornography, early sexual activity and becoming emotionally distant. Ultimately, Children need to receive the combination of these two things from their mother and father, both nurture and a sense of security in relationship.

What is the first thing all of us can do to foster God-endowed leadership and security from our fathers, and from all men, so that they will become the kind of tall trees we need them to be? Simple. The first thing is that we ALL turn to God and we PRAY for the strength of God's power to be exhibited in them for us, and that THEY know THEIR security is found in God. So today in the Prayers of the People, we will include a litany for fathers.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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