

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: Mt. 9:25-10:8

*"Light It Up!"*

**A BLESSED FATHER'S DAY!**

Last month, we honored moms. This month, it's dad's turn! Mother's Day began in the Church, and Father's Day as we know it today soon followed in our nation (about 100 years ago). Just as it is appropriate to honor moms in the church, so, too, we must honor dads. In fact, the custom of celebrating fatherhood can be traced all the way back to at least the Middle Ages in Europe when on March 19, as the feast day of Saint Joseph, fatherhood was honored in the Church.

Just recently I heard about a man by the name of Duranord Veillard who celebrated his 110<sup>th</sup> birthday this past March! The former judge from Haiti had come to the US back in 1967. His wife, Madame Jeanne, turned 107 on May 1. The couple has been married for over eighty years and have four children, twelve grandchildren, fifteen great-grandchildren and I am sure even more great-great-grandchildren!

But can you imagine living to be 110? I'm not sure I would want to...think of the condition you would be in - having someone feed you your birthday cake. I'm reminded of the conversation between a group of seniors at a local senior center. They were all sitting around talking about their ailments. "My arms have gotten so weak, I can hardly lift this cup of coffee," said one. "Yes, I know," said another. "My cataracts are so bad I can't even see my cup of coffee." A third person said, "Why, I couldn't even mark an 'X' at election time, my hands are so crippled." "What? Speak up! What? I can't hear you," said a fourth. A fifth person chimed in: "I can't turn my head because of the arthritis in my neck," to which several nodded weakly in agreement. Another exclaimed, "My blood pressure pills make me so dizzy I can hardly walk." Another elderly gentleman said, "I forgot where I am and where I'm going." "I guess that's the price we pay for getting old," winced an old man as he slowly shook his head and all agreed. "Well, count your blessings," said Betty cheerfully, "Thank God we can all still drive!"

I can't help to add a few funny quotes about fatherhood. Jerry Seinfeld said, *"You can tell what was the best year of your father's life, because they seem to freeze that clothing style and ride it out."*

Mark Twain wrote, *"When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant, I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."*

Rita Runder observed, *"I gave my father \$100 and said, 'Buy yourself something that will make your life easier.' So he went out and bought a present for my mother."*

And Charles Wadsworth said, *"By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he is wrong."*

**THE GIFT OF FATHERHOOD**

The Marines' idea of looking for "a few good men" is not original. It was God who first said, *"I sought for a man..."* Fatherhood, like motherhood, is a gift from God. God is looking for godly men; men who can be fathers in society. You see, while there are similar features that are common to both fatherhood and motherhood, there is a reason why God created man first. There is a reason why we are told in Genesis that *"a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife."* There is a reason why the man asks a woman's hand in marriage. There is a

reason why a man leads the woman in a dance. Why a gentleman will open the door for a woman. It has less to do with cultural norms than how God made us. It reflects the truth that God has created men and men differently with different predominant roles in life. While there is nothing wrong with the idea of equal rights, of men and women being able to function in the various professions of society. That does not mean they have the same predominate strengths and weaknesses; or that there are certain professions that are more ideal for men and others more ideal for women.

Men and women are different not only physically but psychologically. And one of the strengths of men is their ability to take the initiative, to tackle problems and move forward without always second-guessing or overanalyzing. In fact, the Bible is clear. Men are to have the responsibility of spiritual leadership in the home and in the Church. Such leadership is not lordship, however. Jesus said whoever wants to be great in the Kingdom of God must be servant of all. The Apostle Paul said “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church.” It is this attitude that must be the foundation for all spiritual leadership.

It is usually when men fail in their God-given responsibility of spiritual leadership that women feel the need to take over. And there are some women who frankly can do a better job than some men, but that does not negate the standard or God’s intention. As I mentioned on Mother’s Day, when Satan confronted Eve and she needed help, the man did nothing. Adam was a spiritual coach potato. I believe one of the greatest threats to our society is men being spiritual coach potatoes.

Our society has rebelled against God; it despises the differences between men and women; it is all about self - my rights, my feelings, my place in society. In God’s Kingdom, however, we do not have rights; we have responsibilities. We are stewards. And St. Paul said in **1 Cor. 4:2**, “*It is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*”

### **FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP**

And that is what I want to talk about today, faithful leadership. While men might be called to lead in the home and in the church, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are also called to lead - to lead others to Christ. There is a reason why Jesus called us to be lights.

He said in **Mt. 5:16**, “*Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

Have you ever gone camping? It is essential to have a light source, whether fire, a lamp or lantern, or a flashlight. Such things don’t really shine during the day because of the greater light of the sun or, if inside, the light of the dozens of lights on our ceiling. But if there were no other sources of light, we would be in total darkness and that is when our light will shine. That light will be the only light on a dark night, and it would cause us to be able to see.

In the same way, the Bible tells us that we live in a world of spiritual darkness. We live in a world of division, deceit, discord, and confusion. The only way that we can see change in our own lives and in the world around us is if we let Christ’s light shine within us. We are not the source of that light. We are merely the means through which the light will be able to shine.

And so, this call to leadership is for dads, for moms, for our children; it is for everyone who professes Jesus as Lord! Our Gospel lesson this morning gives us the perfect overview for how we shine our light, why we shine it, and when we shine our light.

### **LEAD BY EXAMPLE**

Let’s look back at the Gospel reading from **Matthew 9:35-10:8**:

*“Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”*

Notice Jesus was going through ALL the cities and villages. His message is for everyone. He first preached the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God, and then demonstrated it in action. Jesus didn’t just talk the talk, He walked the walk! He always led by example. If we are to make a difference in the lives of our loved ones, in the world around us, we must lead by example. If parents expect their children not to swear, they better not swear. If you want your children to pray, to study the Word, and go to church, you better be doing the same! Do as I say, and not as I do, won’t work! The best leader, the best father, the best mother, leads by how they live.

### **HAVE COMPASSION FOR OTHERS**

*36“Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.”*

Jesus felt compassion because it reflects His nature. He is a loving God. His Father loves us in and through Christ. *Compassion* literally means “to suffer with.” You are willing not only to sympathize with someone but to enter into their pain in order to alleviate it. You are willing to do something about it! The people of Jesus’ day had the same issues that we face today. They were “distressed” – literally stressed out by life’s challenges. They were “dispirited” – literally brought down in spirit. When someone is overwhelmed by the stresses of life and then down in spirit, it turns into a vicious cycle. Why do you think we have such a terrible drug problem with drug overdoses now the leading cause of death among people under 50? Why is the suicide rate up? People are distressed and dispirited. Who is the only One who can truly set them free? Who is the only One who can give them hope? Who is the only One who sets us free and gives us hope – Jesus! That is why we are to point people to Him. He is the only antidote to life’s pain and suffering.

### **WORK FOR THE HARVEST**

*37Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38“Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”* When Jesus said the harvest is plentiful He was saying that many will respond to the good news of the Kingdom if they see it. That is why we need workers, both full-time and part-time. That is why it is important for our young people to ask if God is calling them to full-time ministry. And if He isn’t, we can still let our light shine in the secular workforce as well and equally important to financially support those who are working for the Kingdom of God full time. I would not be able to be up here or be your priest unless you supported me by your presence, prayers, and finances.

### **WALK IN CHRIST’S AUTHORITY AND POWER**

*“Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”*

Isn't that amazing? Do you know that you have the same authority as Jesus has? And that means you have the same power! But if we are to move in that authority and power, we must do so in faith and in obedience. He is not going to give us His power if we are not listening to Him. If we are to lead for Christ, it means walking under His authority and following His call. The power comes in the “go and do likewise.”

### **KNOW OTHERS BY NAME**

*2Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.*

Notice how all the Apostles are named. Our God is a personal God. He knows us by name. If we are going to impact those around us we need to get to know them personally. There is nothing more personal than our name. It represents who we are, what family we are from, and how we are to be addressed. This past month there have been thousands of graduation ceremonies across the country. We all know that the mention of each graduate by name takes time and can be tedious, but it is vitally important nonetheless. We are patient because we want our loved one to be recognized as well as to show our respect and honor to the others as well. Impacting people for Christ involves showing compassion and concern and a willingness to take time to develop a relationship with them.

### **LETTING YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEGINS IN THE HOME AND THE CHURCH**

*5These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.’*

Why did Jesus tell the twelve to go to the house of Israel first? They did eventually go to Samaria and the Gentiles. But why Israel first? Not only to show how God's plan of salvation for the whole world originates from the house of Israel but He was also making a universal point. We are to *first lead* like Christ in our own homes and then in the church family locally. How else can I shine my light to others if I am not doing so in my family? How can I be an effective leader for Christ if I am not also involved in His Body, the Church? We are to be sent into the mission field *from* the Church. Hence, Jesus says, “*As you go...*” We are to go!

### **BE GIVERS NOT TAKERS**

Finally, He says, “*Freely you received, freely give.*” A true leader is a grateful person. A grateful person will always be a giving person. We can only shine our light when we recognize that all our blessings come from above and that these blessings are meant to be shared! We are to be givers – giving of the truth and love of Christ, giving of our time, our resources, ourselves. And when we give, God promises us to continue to give back to us. It is why Jesus said, “*Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.*” (Lk. 18:29-30).

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!