

8 Things Every Catholic Dad Should Know About Fatherhood

By Garrett Johnson

Father's Day is a day to celebrate the gift and importance of Dad's throughout the world.

It is also a day for each one of us, especially men, to reflect on what it means to be a father, how we are called to live it, and to ask ourselves if we are living in the way that we should.

As with any list or series of points, there can't be any pretension to exhaust the subject. However, I would like to present a few ideas that I think are fundamental to fatherhood.

1. **Encounter with God the Father:** One can't give what he doesn't have. Many of us have been blessed with great fathers growing up (I include myself in this category) but other's haven't. In both cases, however, the source of Fatherhood must always come from above. Any man who seeks to be a good father, ignoring God the Father, will inevitably fall short. One must be aware that you aren't in control of your family, God is. Your leadership and service must be fruit of the obedience and humility that you live towards Him.

2. **Conversion:** A good father must be a converted man, or better yet, a man growing daily in conversion. Any man that abandons his efforts to live a Christian life, who doesn't allow the encounter with God the Father to *transform* him, abandons simultaneously the most fundamental testimony that he can give to his children. The encounter mentioned in the first point must be an effective one, you must *grow, change, mature* daily.

3. **Man of Prayer:** Conversion breaths prayer. Without it, it suffocates. If your schedule is too busy to allow time for prayer, change it.

4. **Understanding your True Vocation:** For those that are blessed to be married and have children, you must recognize that helping your families get to heaven and being good husbands and fathers – not your business career – is your real vocation. Ask yourself: "Is my work serving my family? Or is my family serving my work?"

5. **Presence not presents:** Fatherhood means presence. Presence is “being with”, “being for”. This implies that you invest serious time with your family. And when I say serious time, I am referring to both quantity and quality. Have the courage to set the smartphone down and look your children in the eyes. Take a moment to marvel at who they are and who they are becoming. Look them in the eye, listen to them, speak to them about the things that matter. Share with them how you are doing, what’s going on in your mind, in your heart, in your life. Share your “being” with them, not only what you have. Showering them with presents and fancy gifts is a poor substitute for face-to-face time; in fact, it isn’t a substitute at all.

6. **Courage:** Have the courage to love according to the truth. The truth is that life isn’t easy and neither is being a good Catholic. This means that you can’t be a blend-in kind of father. Have the courage to correct, to teach, to demand, to challenge. And then have the courage to allow them to do the same to you.

7. **Love your wife:** Men, you must love and cherish your wives, plain and simple. Your children will learn to love others by how they see you and your wife love each other. The husband-wife relationship is their first school in love. It is the first lesson in community, in communication, in sacrifice, and in service. To love your wife means to offer your life for her, every day. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it.”

8. **Be humble:** In any relationship of service and authority, one quickly becomes aware of his or her own weaknesses. Don’t be afraid, accept it with humility; it is perhaps one of the greatest displays of authority that exists.

