

How To Be A Real Father

By 'a Catholic Father'.

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A REAL FATHER, when all is said and done, is a self unmade man.

His goal in life is to attain the status of a nobody.

The achievement at which he aims is to be no longer needed.

His usefulness is complete when he has become, to all appearances, useless.

His work, then, is done — and done superbly well.

All this may seem odd, but it isn't odd at all.

Everybody who is at the head of anything ought to be able to agree with it, and to say, "That's the story of my life."

And a father, after all, is at the head of the most fundamentally important thing on earth. The family.

George Washington could count his job finished when the nation he fathered was ready to go on without him.

It's that way with a father. When the family can do just fine without him, he has made the grade.

He has risen to the highest height of fatherhood.

He is ready to join the eternal Father, and be congratulated for having made himself utterly unimportant.

That is the importance of fatherhood, to become less and less important until one is not important at all.

There is really nothing new in this. It has been perceived by all truly great men.

They were greatest when they had made themselves least.

Christ said it: "The last shall be first." Saint John the Baptist realized it: "I must decrease, Christ must increase."

Saint Maker.

It is the essence of the lives of all the saints. And a saint is what a father should be, so that his children will see how to be saints too.

That's what fatherhood is for — to make saints.

The father, everybody says, is the head of the family.

But Saint Paul puts that leadership in proper perspective.

A husband, says Paul, is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, delivering Himself up for it.

What goes for the wife goes, of course, for the children.

A father is to love his family as Christ loved the Church.

He's the family head, all right, as Christ is head of the Church — but that means he's to serve the family as Christ served the Church.

He is to be, in other words, a saint.

The father, of course, starts somewhere down the ladder of sanctity, and climbs up.

It takes time. But he's got a head start.

He gets his start through baptism and the other sacraments, and especially through the marriage sacrament.

His wife confers that on him, and he confers it on her.

He doesn't "get married" — and neither does she.

He and she marry.

It's not something passive; it's something active.

When the bridegroom and the bride walk down the aisle, they are a couple of priests approaching the altar to consecrate each other.

A priest at the altar says, "This is My Body," and Christ is present in the sacrament of Communion.

A bridegroom and a bride say, "I take you," and Christ is present in the sacrament of marriage.

A Life of Prayer.

Then the husband and the wife walk out of the church to see each other through life to eternal life — to people heaven with themselves, and in most cases with children.

Their life together is to be a prayer — a sacrament; a sacramental way of life, as a priest's life is a sacramental way.

Their union of souls is a prayer, and their union of bodies is a prayer too.

They rise into very high prayer when they bring forth a child for God, and rear it for God.

They give God a great gift, as He gives them a great gift. And they give their child the gift of existence and of eternal destiny with God.

Their child is a birthday present to itself, to themselves, and to God.

The father is the person who watches over all these treasures through the years.

He watches for God — and God helps him watch.

If he walks the floor with baby, he is walking the floor for God.

God loves baby boundlessly more than he does — boundlessly more even than its mother does.

And God has all eternity in which to thank the father for watching over their baby — God's baby, father's baby, mother's baby.

God will do that. God won't forget the sleepless hours, the going to work and coming home, the 'do-it-yourself-ing' to provide what the mother and children need, the sacrificing to feed and clothe and educate the little ones.

God won't forget one bit of it — not any more than He forgets what the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph did for His Only Begotten Son.

He'll never forget the man who stands in His place in a home, exercising His Fatherhood over one or more of His children.

Especially He won't forget the father who, understanding the paradox and the mystery of fatherhood, works to make himself less and less until at last he is nothing — at which point he is really something.

There was a little girl — oh, well, she's my daughter — who thought her father could do practically anything, as if he were nearly almighty like God.

She burst into tears and went stomping into the house from the back-yard once because her father wouldn't catch a robin in his hands for her to play with.

She didn't understand that it wasn't a case of wouldn't but a case of couldn't.

Her father tried to explain, but failed. After all, wasn't he her father? And can't fathers do anything they set their minds to?

So, stomping into the house she went, to tell her mother that her father wouldn't even catch a little old robin for her.

The little girl is a Sister now. She knows now that there are lots of things a father can't do. And she no longer needs her father as she did in her catch-me-a-robin days.

They Decrease.

Her father and mother have brought her to the point where they are no longer necessary to her. Nice to have, yes — but not necessary.

They are decreased, Christ has increased.

There was a little boy — oh, well, he's our son — who was annoyed because his father wouldn't reach up and pluck the moon out of the sky and give it to him.

He didn't understand that it wasn't a matter of wouldn't, but a matter of couldn't.

He thought his father was holding out on him.

Now he's living in the sacrament of marriage, and he has sons of his own, and his father is no longer as indispensable as before. Nice to have, yes — but not necessary, as he once was.

Father is decreasing, Christ is increasing.

That, then, is what a father is — a man growing greater and greater by making himself smaller and smaller.

How, specifically, does he go about it?

What do marriage and fatherhood do to him?

And what does he do with his marriage? The two things go together; they interact.

If a man is basically sound — and most men are — marriage makes him humble and realistic and dedicated.

It transforms, little by little, his male egoism and his pride in his own strength into humility and dependence on God.

It begins this process when he sits waiting, helpless, as his wife goes through childbirth. It begins it also through the gentle but persistent influence of his beloved.

Marriage, too, washes away gradually the vanities and trivialities of young malehood.

A husband-father slowly turns his interest from himself to those who look to him for protection.

Where he could not be overcome by strength, but would fight strength with his own strength, he is powerless to resist the appeal of helplessness.

A baby can do to him what a squad of policemen couldn't.

From demanding to be served, he turns to wanting to serve. And in serving, he grows in spiritual stature and real manliness.

He sees first, naturally enough, the material needs that must be met.

On Tiptoe.

Someone has said that Saint Thomas Aquinas saw the father of a man forever standing on tiptoe, trying to peer into the future in order to provide for those for whom he is responsible.

He is a bread-winner. As we say, he brings home the bacon.

Shelter, food, clothing for his family — this is his first concern; for these he will labour and plan and sweat and endure humiliations — and even fight.

Seldom does he stop to realize how approvingly God looks down upon his strivings and his sacrifices for God's little ones. But God does.

Standing on tiptoe, the father tries to put something away for the time of need. There is a vivid expression for this — he makes himself "insurance-poor".

The truth is, of course, that he is trying to make his family insurance-secure.

Standing beside the cradle — on tiptoe — he looks ahead to the baby's college years, and its early years of marriage.

He thinks, too, of the unpredictability of life. He may fall ill, he may be injured, he may die. He sets up safeguards as well as he is able.

He recognizes, too, that the years are short; soon enough he and his wife will reach advanced years. He wants savings, he wants modest investments, he wants a pension.

He stands on tiptoe and plans and plans.

'Sometimes' there is a failure of understanding between him and his wife.

Perhaps she looks more to the present and does not realize his feel for the future.

They may disagree because she wants furniture and he wants insurance or money at interest or a business of his own or a sound investment.

She wants better clothing for the children while he is thinking about their education, and about a nest-egg for them when they are ready to go into the world.

Here the father must be patient, wise, good-humoured but reasonably firm. And he must try to communicate something of his vision to his wife and the older children.

The needs she sees are real, as are the needs he sees.

The Best Balance.

He must strive for the best possible balance, and for amicable agreement on what that balance is.

Sometimes he must yield, recognizing that the joy she receives from a set of drapes or a new rug is more important at the moment than another deposit in the savings account.

It is all a matter of proportion; and the husband-father must strive for correct proportion — not mathematically correct, but reasonably so.

As he matures, the good father perceives needs beyond those of the material sort — and sees that these other needs are even more important.

Prayer, for instance.

His life is in the hands of God. So is his safety, and the safety of his home and family, and the stability of the civilization in which he works.

Very likely, the father begins by becoming personally more and more prayerful; but soon he seeks to draw his children into his prayerfulness.

He sees that he has a responsibility for their spiritual care as well as for their material needs.

He begins deepening his awareness of God, and his knowledge of the things of God, because he wants to impart them to his little ones.

New Admiration.

All this time, the husband, almost always, grows more admirable and lovable in the eyes of his wife.

Nothing attracts the normal woman more than goodness, character, dependability, and the things that grow out of real goodness — courtesy, consideration, understanding, and above all, tenderness.

It is a rare woman who does not respond to tenderness as a flower to the sun; who is not made singingly happy by strength united with gentleness in her husband.

After all, he is hers; she wants to be proud of him, to look up to him, to admire him, to know that others are touched and impressed by his qualities.

The father who turns to prayer and to the sources of grace in the sacraments discovers — especially if he does it while his children are still young — that he is loved and respected and imitated, and that his home life grows happier.

He finds that there is no need for shouting or striking or severe discipline.

A child, like a wife, responds to goodness and kindness. And kindness and goodness, once begun in a home, are passed along through the generations, with incalculable benefit to the world.

A father, then, is a bringer-home of bacon. But he is also an educator, a religious inspirer, a theologian who must know and teach about God and the things of God.

He is a diplomat, too — a kind of statesman who negotiates for peace and harmony in the world of the home.

He is so many things that a listing would grow tedious.

But, above all, the father is an example.

It is impossible to exaggerate how impressionable young people are. Their eyes and ears and sensitivities are wide open.

Their attitude towards sex, for instance, will be profoundly affected by what they perceive and sense in their father and mother.

If they live in an atmosphere of purity of speech and attitude and behaviour, purity will be a shiningly attractive thing to them.

If they see a tenderness amounting to reverence between their father and mother, at least half the battle for their own success in marriage will have been won, hands down.

A daughter whose father is considerate of her mother will seek a considerate husband for herself when the times comes. She will not be drawn to one who is crude, boastful, overbearing, thoughtless, even cruel.

A son whose father treats his mother with chivalry will treat his wife so, almost invariably, and will have therefore a happy marriage.

Give and Take.

These things go down the generations.

A father and mother who are kind to their own parents, and patient with them as they grow dependent with age, will almost certainly receive kindness from their own children in their own advancing years.

The good father, then, is a man who rules by serving, and through service creates a splendid world not only for his wife and his little ones, but for himself too.

He does not, for instance, arbitrarily decide that his son shall be a doctor or lawyer or plumber or engineer or electrician or farmer or whatever.

In prayer and in patient observation, he studies his boys. What he wants for them is whatever God made them for — whatever their abilities and talents and inclinations suggest as most suitable for them.

It is so, too, with his daughters. He does not push them into occupations or careers, nor try to choose their husbands for them.

What he does do is to create, as far as it is within his power, conditions in which they will come under the best influences, and meet the most desirable people — desirable not for wealth or position, but for character and virtue.

The wise father will set before his children the various possibilities for the future, urging that all the possibilities be considered.

Yes, it may be that his son would make an excellent politician or statesman or carpenter or other sons would make excellent businessmen or industrialists or agriculturists or whatever.

But the wise father does not leave out of consideration what is called the religious life. The Religious life is brought into consideration along with the other vocations and avocations.

What the wise father wants is what is best for his sons and daughters — not what might cater to his pride or his ambition.

From the first toddling steps his little ones take, the wise father begins to help them grow away from dependence on him, and toward self-determination, although always under God.

He does not cling to them or make them instruments of his self-esteem; and if his wife shows a tendency to apron-string them, he acts diplomatically and gradually to correct it.

The Sublime Model.

The father will pause sometimes to consider Saint Joseph.

There is a sublime model of father-hood on earth.

There is a silent sermon on fatherhood which is greater and more inspiring than any words.

Joseph was chosen by God to stand in God's place toward God-made-man.

God, to put the matter strikingly, gave His fatherhood over Himself into the hands of Joseph.

Joseph was father of Christ in all but physical generation. His dedication to Mary and Jesus was total and totally unselfish.

He is the ever-lasting reminder of the fact that fatherhood is a lifelong affair; that it consists of immeasurably more than physical generation.

God, in effect, said to Joseph: "I am coming to earth and to humanity through a Virgin, and I am placing her and Myself in your hands, to be fed, sheltered, clothed, protected from harm, given security and love and courtesy. I am going to look to you to train my hands, to be my companion, to warn Me away from dangers, to watch over Me as I grow from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to adolescence and young manhood. I will even ask you questions about Myself as God, and in My humanity I will depend upon you for wise and true answers."

Simple Task.

In some ways, Joseph's task was simple — as are the tasks of all fathers — although always more or less demanding.

First came the physical needs of the Holy Family.

To meet those needs, Joseph had prepared himself.

He was a worker — a skilled worker — an artisan and a mechanic, a man who could turn his hand to the making of useful things, and the repairing of broken things.

Joseph was a little capitalist, too; doubtless he owned his tiny workshop and the tools of his trade. And he must have saved some money.

He was a manager — at the very least, he had one helper, one “employee”, Christ, who must be directed and taught and supervised. There was at least that much management-labour relations involved.

Joseph must have kept some records — about what jobs had been agreed upon, which had been done, which had been paid for. And to some extent, he certainly bargained about his wages; he set prices for his services, and collected his pay.

He got up in the morning and went to work like any father.

But as any father worthy of the name must be, Joseph was much more than a provider of material goods.

He was “a man on tiptoe”, a man peering into the future, a man guarding against dangers to his family, a man turning to God for guidance in the perplexities of life.

He was humble, patient, courteous, considerate, quick to love and praise, slow to blame and condemn.

When it seemed that Mary was improperly with child, Joseph did not utter a word of judgement or reproach.

He sat down and thought about the problem in all kindness, and concluded that since he could not, in fidelity to his own vow of virginity, marry one who appeared to have betrayed the same vow, he must quietly step out of the picture. But he kept an open mind and sought guidance in prayer.

The guidance was given to him.

When the Christ-Child was in danger, Joseph turned again to God with confidence. And in a dream, he was warned to flee into Egypt.

God’s providence for fathers does not often take the form of warnings in dreams. But the providence is there; God in his Fatherhood has a special tenderness for fathers, and hears their prayers.

Indeed, this is the foremost need of a family — the prayers of the father; for those are the prayers that most affect the whole life of the family, not only by bringing God’s blessing, but by making a man the kind of father whose example and influence make the family all that it ought to be.

Many Assistants.

In the business of being a father today, a man has a thousand helpers whose assistance, if it is accepted, make his task easier.

He has his pastor and his parish and his school. He has the community. He has doctors and nurses and hospitals and clinics. He has newspapers and radio and TV to keep him informed of needs and dangers and of ways of meeting them.

He has government watching over the common good. He has the police and the firemen guarding against lawlessness and disaster. He has the corner drug store, the merchant who provides pure and healthful foods.

Here again, the list could grow tedious. It is enough to say that a father should notice how much help is “at hand”, and be grateful for it, and turn to it when needful.

When he is at a loss for what to do in a perplexity or an emergency, there are all kinds of skilled helpers and counsellors.

The father is by no means alone.

It could honestly be said that he is surrounded by a vast conspiracy of kindness to assist him in rearing for the future the kind of young men and women the world needs.

The conspiracy is human — and it is divine too.

No one need be afraid of being a father, or of not being able to be a good father. All that is needed is the will to be all that a father ought to be, and the humility to accept the help that is everywhere.

That done, the man can proceed to make of himself the kind of parent whose children and grandchildren will rise up and call him blessed.

This is the whole matter of marriage and fatherhood and it goes back, of course, to finding the right girl.

In this connection, the theologian Frank Sheed has remarked, humorously and practically, that marriages are made in Heaven — but matches aren't.

In one sense, that's true. In a deeper sense, it's not a complete statement of the case.

Probably there are thousands of women who could be "the right girl" for a man... and visa versa.

And, of course, the choice of partners is largely a human decision, whereas, once the choice is made, the fact enters the picture that marriage is a divine institution and a sacrament.

But God's providence is in the picture, too, all along.

Providence has a great deal to do with putting people where they are. It has a great deal to do with who meets whom, and in what circumstances.

It certainly has something very important to do with the mysterious attraction of two persons which causes them to want each other for life; to feel that they can make each other happy and cannot be happy without each other.

There is an inexplicable exclusiveness about this matter. This young man wants this young woman for his wife, and no other; and this young woman wants this young man and no other.

So it is, at least, where young men and young women are free to choose for themselves.

There is truth in the poems and the novels and the dramas which have for their central theme this unbreakability of the love of two persons for each other — a love which will consider no substitutes, and is heartbroken if anything interferes.

A Great Vocation.

But there is a still deeper aspect.

Marriage is a vocation — a way of life — a means of going to God; and it should no more be chosen without prayer than should the priesthood or the Brotherhood or the Sisterhood... or single life in the world.

Like other prayers, prayers for the finding of the right vocation are heard and answered. And if the vocation is marriage, prayers for the right partner are answered also.

Thus marriage, even in its earliest beginnings in dating and courtship, is holy. And why not, seeing that it is all concerned with partnering God in the creation of new immortal beings — with the peopling of earth and Heaven?

Heaven, it would seem, has a hand in matches as well as in marriages.

And there are beginnings before this beginning.

One of the duties of parents is so to rear their boys and girls that they will be good husbands and wives if marriage is their calling.

Included is the duty of parents to pray that their sons and daughters find the right partners when the time comes.

Thus, happiness in marriage has roots that go far back — although even the sons and daughters of unhappy and unpraying marriages can, through their own prayers and dedication, create happy marriages for themselves.

They can start a dynasty of happiness if it has not been started for them by their own forebears.

Very well, then; we come to the young man and the young woman who have discovered that they love each other and want to marry.

These are golden days for them — and it is well that it is so. They are young, and life is wonderful, and in each other, they find a strange joy.

Good. But amid their rejoicing and their romance, they should occasionally have some deep thoughts.

The boy should ponder the fact that he is about to become not only the head of a family, but the head of a tribe of families.

In all likelihood, he will some day be a grandfather, even while he is living. Maybe even a great grandfather.

His tribe will increase. For no one knows how many years or centuries or aeons after his death, his descendants will be multiplying and spreading through the nation and perhaps across the world.

The Future.

The future of mankind will be profoundly affected by what he and his bride make of their marriage.

If they rear their children well, in the love of God and fellowmen — if they educate them and form their characters rightly, human history will be influenced for great good. If not, humanity's tomorrows will be hurt.

That is how important fatherhood and motherhood are.

The effects of good parenthood, furthermore, do not end on earth. They reach into eternity.

The father and mother of the child Mary could not know that their baby would one day be asked to bring God incarnate into the world for the redemption of mankind, and would reply, "Be it done unto me according to Your word."

Mary's parents, like the rest of us, simply accepted their vocation of marriage, lived up to it gloriously, and left the outcome in the hands of God.

No father knows what destiny awaits his sons and daughters. But one thing he can know — and one thing he should deeply realize: each child sent to him has a work to do which is important in the divine plan.

It is his task, and his wife's, to see that the youngsters are ready for whatever their destiny may be.

Some descendant of yours — or mine — may land upon, and explore, some distant planet, and sow the seeds of some tremendous new civilization.

Or some other descendant may lead a simple, hidden life which through God's grace is even more influential for the future of the race.

What, then, is the essence of the mystery of being a good father?

Trust in God.

The essence can be capsuled in three words: Trust in God.

Or in the nine words of Mary, which surely expressed also the central motivation of the life of Saint Joseph: "Be it done unto me according to Your word."

A father is not thinking straight if he attempts to rear his children by his own unaided power.

The children come to him because he has cooperated with God in their creation.

They are his children, but God's also.

He and God must work hand in hand, in their rearing. And this is the secret of fully successful fatherhood.

The father should not ask, "What do I want for my children?" He should ask, "What does God want? Why did God send them to me and not to somebody else? What counsel does God have to give me in bringing them to manhood and womanhood?"

A father should insist in prayer that God have a hand in everything he does for his children.

If his boy or girl asks a question, he should try to answer it as God would answer it if put to Him directly.

After all, it is put to God indirectly, because the father is exercising God's fatherhood, as did Joseph toward Christ.

A father should be as considerate and courteous toward his children as he would be toward the most respected and exalted person in the community.

More — he should be as courteous and considerate as he would be toward Christ.

He must never punish in anger, nor should strive to act except as Saint Joseph would act, even in cold calculation. He has no right to punish at all unless he punishes in love.

This means that he first gets the whole story; he tries to understand; he puts himself in the child's place and comprehends the child's childlikeness and inexperience and impetuosity.

He reminds himself that the child is God's as well as his.

Often he looks at his children and thinks about the fact that they are images and likenesses of their Creator.

God gave them minds and wills of their own.

Truth will attract their minds. Goodness will attract their wills.

That is the father's job — and of course the mother's — to fill the lives of the children with the attractions of goodness and truth.

Yes, youngsters must be warned away from sin. They must know the 'do-nots'.

Here, however, a cautionary note is needed. Sin should not be confused with human preferences. Sin is what is against God's directives for our happiness. Sin is not what annoys adults.

Maybe the noise and the energy of children make you nervous. All right; ask them to soft-pedal it a bit. But don't invent a lot of sins for them. There are plenty of real sins without that.

Yes — youngsters must be warned of sin; but it is still more important to attract them to virtue.

They should be attracted to virtue, first through seeing virtue in their parents; and then also, of course, by being taught virtue through gentle explanation.

Few fathers realize the tremendous effect upon children of virtue in themselves.

Men tend to think that the chief influence in the home is the mother. She is tremendously important — but nothing so deeply affects a child as goodness in the father, because the father, for the child is the great strong person who holds up the universe.

When the child sees such strength united with patience, tenderness, kindness, understanding, thoughtfulness and helpfulness, the youngster, even though subconsciously, is profoundly moved.

Children love their mother; but they nearly worship their father if he is what a father ought to be.

Their love for a good father is a love filled with a kind of awe.

It is the sort of love that a saint has for God — it is love and trust and yet it is also an awareness of majesty and power.

Mirror of Love.

Children, then, are especially drawn toward God when they are drawn toward their father. And this is natural enough — although it is also supernatural — because the father is the embodiment in his home of the Fatherhood of God.

The father, therefore, must mirror God as accurately as possible.

Let him remember always that God's first approach to man is not the approach of fear, but the approach of loving man and of wanting to be loved in return.

The first thing God did toward man, after creating him, was to place him in a paradise.

He provided everything for man's happiness, for his joy, for his comfort. He was lavish in meeting all man's needs.

There was food and warmth and security in paradise; and beauty for eye and ear; and everything to delight man so that his days and nights were things of joy and cheer.

Only when man rejected God was there trouble.

What happened was that man refused to trust God.

Man believed the tempter who said that God was lying in saying that there was one thing man must not do.

God said that if man did that thing, he would die. The tempter said that if man did it, man would be a god. And man embraced the lie of the tempter, and spurned the truth of God.

But children will not think that their father, who gives them home and food and clothing and jollity, is a liar.

If he approaches them with love, they will respond to love.

Punishment should be his last thought, not his first. And he should never resort to it unless it is dictated by love as being necessary.

The father should emulate God in approaching God's children and his by making of the home a little paradise for them, and making of himself a mirror of God's goodness toward them.

If he schemes for their happiness, they will embrace virtue.

Good Books.

One of the effective ways of showing virtue to children is through good books. A father should read to them, should help them to learn to read, and within his financial means should see to it that they have the right things to read.

If he cannot afford books, he can go along with the youngsters to the library as he goes with them to the zoo and the circus and the parks.

What books he can afford, he should give, because an owned book influences a child more than a borrowed book does.

It is not unqualifiedly true that a child will be what the child reads, but there is considerable truth in it.

A child will be what he reads and sees and hears and feels — plus what in him is unique because he is a person in his own right; a being who will never be duplicated.

It is a father's business to surround his youngsters with everything possible that is good for them, as God surrounded man with good things in paradise.

The father who does that will have few problems with his children, assuming that his judgment about what is good for them is a right judgment.

Forming that right judgment is part of his obligation as a father. And that means that he forms himself rightly — he lives up to himself as an image of God, as a partner with God in fatherhood, and as a brother of Christ in virtuous manliness.

Self-Unmade Man.

To go back to the beginning, the good father is the self-unmade man.

He is one who is striving to make himself unneeded.

He is working to rear boys and girls into the fullness of good manhood and womanhood in which they can go about their Father's business without his supervision.

His work as a father is done, in one sense, when he can close his front door and turn back into a house empty of little ones because the little ones are now following their own destinies.

Of course, they will be back, in all likelihood — back for visits to make the house jump with the shouts and scamperings of grandchildren.

But by that time, father's job is largely done; his work now is to be a good grandfather — which is another story.

In another sense, though, the task of the father is never finished until the end of time.

Even after his youngsters have departed to go with God toward their own destinies, he watches over them in prayer.

Sometimes, too, he gently counsels them and he is a happy man if he has been the kind of father to whom they return seeking advice and companionship because he is a grand and lovable person.

Maybe the final test of successful fatherhood is the attitude of the sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. If they like being around their father-in-law, it is time to strike a medal and pin it on him.

And they will like being around him if he has risen, through the years, to the challenge, the privilege and the rollicking joy of being what a father can be in cooperation with the Father of all — if in short, he has succeeded in making himself great by making himself ever smaller in service to his wife and children.

When Father has contrived to make himself nothing, he is then really something. When he is a nobody, he is emphatically a somebody — and the generations will rise up and call him blessed.

(Thanks to "Our Sunday Visitor".)
