

The Deacon's Corner by Deacon Ron Desmarais

Fatherhood?

I was looking over the news on the internet and I came across a headline that stated Steve Jobs wanted to publish a biography so his kids could know him.

SAN FRANCISCO: Steve Jobs, in pain and too weak to climb stairs a few weeks before his death, wanted his children to understand why he wasn't always there for them, according to the author of his highly anticipated biography. "I wanted my kids to know me. I wasn't always there for them, and I wanted them to know why and to understand what I did," Jobs told Isaacson in their final interview at Jobs' home in Palo Alto, California.

This got me thinking about fatherhood and what it means. I also was really saddened by the idea that Steve Jobs who had a wonderful, productive life, did all the world glorifies yet realized at the end of his life he was leaving his children all his worldly possessions, money, and a secure future, but needed to publish a book to tell them who he was. At least he was able to have some time to publish a book, but how many others never get that opportunity.

What makes me sad about the article on Steve Jobs is that he retired from Apple in August and died in at the beginning of October. Instead of taking time to be with his family, he took time to say the things he felt he had to say in a book, not in person. He continued working at Apple until the illness became too much for him.

The book may be dedicated to his children, but in reality he tries to justify his failure to be with his children while they were growing up. It tells his children that Apple was his real child and they were only step-children. A sad legacy isn't it.

Obviously I am affected by the article on Steve Jobs. I pray that his relationship with his children is not as

fractured as alluded to in the article. I pray that he did step out at the end of his life and try and make amends.

God wrote a book to His children as well, however, it is not a book from God telling us what he did and why he did it. It is a book by His children that tells the story of their relationship with their (our) Father. God tells Abraham, "*Between you and me I will establish my covenant...I will maintain my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout the ages as an everlasting covenant, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*" (Genesis 17:2, 7)

When Moses spoke to God in the burning bush God tells him, "*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering.*" (Exodus 3:6-7)

God tells Moses of his relationship with his ancestors and that like the Father He is He sees and responds to their plight. This is a long, established relationship that continues from Abraham down to the present time with Moses, from Moses to Jesus, and from Jesus to us today.

Jesus tells us that the Father sent him, that He and the Father are one. It is obvious He had a relationship with His Father that we can't have, but God the Father knows how to be a Father to His children and He should be our role model. The fact that God is perfect should not stop us from emulating him. Matthew tells us (5:48), "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"

Often we try to be a good parent and forget that our children are growing up. When I grew up my father disciplined me like

a child. When I graduated from high school my father "changed" from parent to mentor. He began treating me as a young adult and not as a child. Our relationship underwent a change. I began to see my father as someone I could talk to about things and not someone who just disciplined me. Overtime I learned to be a father myself and used him as my role model. Later I could even disagree with my Dad and not feel I was just talking back. Now that he is gone there is a big hole in my life. I can't just pick up the phone and call him. I still talk to him in prayer. I tell him I miss him. I tell him "I'm doing this for you Dad". I still ask him for advice, knowing he won't answer, but it gives me comfort and peace. I feel confident that we will catch up on things when I join him in heaven.

We can always look back on our life and wish we had done things differently, but we can't change the things we did. We have to live with the consequences of our decisions or actions. If we have done something wrong then it presents us with an opportunity to take corrective action and/or apologize. Christ tells us, *"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."* (Mark 11:26) We need to make the first step.

I'm going to tell you right up front that I don't think I'm the greatest Dad. I know that my time in the Army took me away from my family, but I tried to provide for them the best way I could though I wasn't always there for them. I can say that I have a relationship with my children. We talk, we share, we disappoint one another in the choices we make, and we know that it could be better. There are even times when we get mad and don't talk to each other for a while, but the ties are never broken completely.

Ten years ago I had to do a homily on the Prodigal Son. A week before my son asked me to get something from his dresser. While doing so I found an old letter I had written him and his brother. I was stationed

in Augsburg, Germany and attending the First Sergeant Academy in Munich. What prompted my writing the letter was to talk to them about what it meant to be brothers. Marc got into an argument with his brother Michael in the car. In his anger Marc picked up a tire pressure gauge and threw it at his brother breaking his front tooth. Because I could not leave I wrote them a letter. I read portions of the letter during my homily. I told them about what it meant to be brothers, recounted the story of Cain and Abel, as well as Peter denying Jesus three times. I told them that turning against your brother were no different than Judas turning against Jesus. I told them how important it was for them to be a brother to each other.

Several years later I was in Safeway and a woman came up to me. She asked, "Are you the deacon that wrote the letter to his two boys?" I told her I was and she began to tell me that her husband had been in church with her that day and heard what I had written the boys. This made him reflect on his own relationship with his sons, and the regrets he had about being a good father to them. Since that time he had reached out to them and made attempts to rectify their relationship. She didn't tell me if he had been successful and I didn't ask. I was touched that having shared that letter someone else had been touched as well. I think about that man every now and then and I pray that he was successful.

I thank Steve Jobs for making me reflect on fatherhood and what being a father means to me. "Lord I pray for Steve Jobs, that he may find a peace he never had on earth. That his children will come to know their father through the book he left them. I pray for all of us fathers that you will give each of us the grace we need to be a good father, to love and care for each of our children. Amen."