

## HOMILY HELPS

Rather than drawing from the readings of the day, some general points are provided for consideration as you honor fathers and highlight the gift and responsibility of fatherhood, while also showing sensitivity and compassion to all who may find this holiday especially challenging.

One or more of these reflections on fatherhood could be included as part of a larger homily, and other ministry leaders could also use these reflections as the basis for small group discussions or other faith-sharing scenarios.

### Father's Day | Third Sunday of June

- ◆ All men are called to the vocation of spiritual fatherhood; some are also called to live this out as fathers of biological, adopted, or foster children. The societal observance of Father's Day, in addition to the traditional observance of the holiday, is also an opportunity to highlight the spiritual fatherhood of godparents, priests, deacons, uncles, and other men who often serve as fathers in important ways within extended family, parish communities, or individuals' lives.
- ◆ Fatherhood has its origins in God, who chose to reveal Himself to us as Our Father, sending his only Son for the sake of our salvation. Fathers therefore have a special role "in revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God" (*Familiaris consortio* 25).
- ◆ **In our efforts to honor, offer thanksgiving, and pray for fathers, it is also important to remember that Father's Day can be a difficult holiday for some**, such as those who have lost or are estranged from their fathers, couples who are struggling with infertility, and fathers who have lost one or more children through miscarriage, abortion, or in some other way. **You may want to take a moment to verbally acknowledge there are some who may find this holiday to be painful and invite the congregation to pray for them.** Those struggling with feelings of loss, emptiness, or loneliness on this holiday may feel overlooked, and this simple gesture can communicate a sense of understanding and support.
- ◆ **Fathers need to be encouraged to support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life. Research continues to show that the top reasons women seek abortions include lacking support from the child's father and financial challenges, which are only exacerbated by a father's absence. Fathers should be informed of and formed in the irreplaceable role they hold in the lives of their children and the responsibility they share in welcoming God's gift of new life.**
- ◆ Pope Saint John Paul II said fathers are called to exhibit "generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother" (*Familiaris consortio* 25). They are uniquely entrusted with the protection and defense of both mother and child and, in this way, in safeguarding the sanctity of human life.
- ◆ Pope St. John Paul II also wrote that, in the case of an abortion decision "the father of the child may be to blame, not only when he directly pressures the woman to have an abortion, but also when he indirectly encourages such a decision on her part by leaving her alone to face the problems of pregnancy: in this way the family is thus mortally wounded and profaned in its nature as a community of love and in its vocation to be the 'sanctuary of life'" (*Evangelium vitae* 59).
- ◆ Although men do not bear the physical challenges of carrying a child within themselves, they can still be overwhelmed by the news of an unexpected or difficult pregnancy. Further, society increasingly tells them that they should have no say in the lives of their children before birth.
- ◆ **As a Church community, we need to encourage and support men to follow the example of St. Joseph and embrace their role as father.** Joseph, himself, was unexpectedly called to fatherhood amid difficult circumstances. But despite all obstacles, he was faithful. He welcomed life, offering care and protection to Mary and Jesus.

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