

Sermon: June 20, 2010

“Chat with my dad”

I had a “little chat” with my dad ... out-back ... this morning. I miss him a lot.

We “dads” are an interesting lot. We fall short ...we do some things right ...

Many dads are “absent” ... some of us are too stubborn to love like we should. And some of us are not so-called “real dads” ... but we become fathers to those who need a bit of nurturing and grace.

MY DAD WAS A MAN OF FEW WORDS.

I’ve talked many times about our 7:30 PM Sunday night phone calls ... me, with a glass of brandy in my hand, sitting on our front porch.

“Hi, Layman (this is what I called him) ... how are you today?”

“Good ... Reverend (this is what he called me) --- how was the sermon this morning?”

“Dad, the sermon was marginal ...but my coffee was good.”

“Don, nice talking to you...”

“I love you dad ...”

Then ...the Swedish moment of silence ... the words “I love you” aren’t easy for a Swedish man to say.

So, my dad responds ----- “You, too” (Oh, well .. that’s Swedish for “I love you” ...)

My favorite letter from my dad goes like this:

“Dear Donnie ... I had nothing to do, so I thought I’d write ...

I have nothing to say ... so I think I’ll close ... Love, DAD.”

The gospel for today is about “casting out demons.”

I have my share of demons ... I guess we all do.

My dad ... he was a humble man. I remember when he died 8 years ago. His funeral is on a Thursday ... our phone rings the next day ----- “IT IS TIME ... COME TO TEXAS AND GET QUINTON!!”

The end of one journey ...the beginning of another. My dad was so considerate ... he would never want his funeral to get in the way of our new son coming home!@!!

Anyway --- back to “demons.”

This morning I asked my dad for a little extra dose of humility. I asked him to help me ... especially at this stage of my life ... to put others first ... and quit insisting on my own way.

I asked him to help me ----- never to measure success by how much we have ... or by what we accomplish ... or by the “accolades” that may come our way.

Rather ... help me see success as a JOURNEY.

Spiritual. Quiet. Never drawing attention to oneself.

Dad ---- help me keep my expectations simple ----- a little spark here, a little miracle there.

So often I think ----- the world would be so much better off ... we would be happier ... we’d be more content ... if we could just DO what the bracelet says:

“Accept yourself ... accept others.”

I think of all the things too often separating us ----- *religion, our color, tattoos, test scores, abilities and disabilities, how we look ... our weight, life-style, age ... the way we dress ... politics and money ...*

When we let stuff like this get in the way ... we are like the maniac “in the tombs” we become afraid, unsure ...we have all kinds of “gunk” inside of us.

And ----- *we need to be set free.*

Out back this morning ... I’m thinking: without even saying a word ... my dad SET ME FREE.

Free to be myself ... to be human ... to be imperfect ...

Free to learn and to grow and to be a “spiritual success” --- if not always an earthly one.

For a moment, my thoughts turn to the garage sale.
This event is an INSANE AMOUNT OF WORK for many of you. How do you measure its success????
In the “old days” ----- raising \$1000 was a success ... then it became \$5000 ... last year: \$10,000!!
We knew going in ----- that ain’t gonna happen this year.

One of the “demons” that overtakes me the most is ----- losing sight of what’s important
and what’s not.

It’s Friday ... the place is packed. Pat comes up to me ----- “Don, there is someone you need to meet.”
I’m in the hallway just outside the gym ----- lots of folks and commotion.
I meet a young couple ... both of whom have recently been laid-ff.
They have a little baby ---- “Tinley Grace.”
I look at her she is beautiful. It’s obvious, too ... she is severely disabled. Her toes are fused together ...
her head is very mis-shapen.

Her parents say to me ----- so often we go out in public, and when people see our child ... well, they
walk the other way. But this morning ... we are here less than 5 minutes ... and people all over are embracing us.

A couple minutes later ... about 10 of us are in a circle, holding hands.

We pray.

I’ve prayed in a lot of places in my life ----- never in the middle of the garage sale.
Lots of healing ... for this young couple, for Tinley Grace, for us garage sale folks in purple shirts.
This family walks out ... their cup half-full ... money from our “love-bucket” in an envelope.

How do you measure success?

Once we “cast out our demons” ... well, it isn’t all that hard.

The acceptance of a child.

A St. Coletta’s counselor shopping for his clients.

A couple from Lithuania sending clothes to their family backhome.

A bag of “stuff” for only \$5 ... if that’s too much ----- it’s all yours!!

A smile ... a gift ... seeds of goodness and grace.

A GOOD DOSE OF HUMILITY.

Like my dad says: “You don’t have to say much ... as long as you leave seeds of love behind.”

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