

September 2008

Sunday 7

Father's Day

Ordinary Time 23

Come Back, Brother

Mt 18:15-20

Monday 8

Mary's Birthday

Sunday 14

Ordinary Time 24

Forgive Others

Mt 18:21-35

Sunday 21

Ordinary Time 25

The First Shall Be Last

Mt 20:1-16

Sunday 28

Ordinary Time 26

The Father's Will

Mt 21:28-32

Daddy

Magic



Celebrating the gift of fatherhood

While my husband would be the first to admit his shortcomings as a father, I none the less am awed by his capacity to influence our children. In the early years of parenting, my role as a mother was unquestioned: babies and young children are so clearly dependent on their mother...Daddy was great to have around but 'mother' was the centre of their world. However as our children have grown the balance of relevance has shifted and the role of 'father' has become more substantial and unique. With our children no longer babies, but teenagers and emerging adults, more often than not I find myself most effective as a mother when I just keep out of the way, keep the food coming and let my husband do his 'Daddy Magic'.

What is Daddy Magic? It is the amazing influence that my husband has around interacting with each child, most especially on the hard topics. For example, both our sons are at the stage of selecting high school subjects. It is a difficult choice for them as they are still discovering where their interests and abilities lie. To my frustration, neither has yet developed a value for hard work and endless maternal nagging seems only to entrench their determined resistance.

Enter Daddy Magic. Through carefully timed conversations he has managed to connect with the interior longing of each son. He knows and understands their secret terror of failure and irrelevance. He can speak to their heart in a way that doesn't shame or criticise. He calls forth their manliness and inspires confidence in themselves. He appeals to their innate, masculine virtue – the desire to succeed, to make a significant contribution, to be respected and admired for their integrity. When the culture is telling boys over and over to selfishly seize every opportunity for their personal gain, Daddy Magic speaks truth to the heart of our teenage sons: "You're better than that. You have what it takes to be great in the service of others. You have the making of a true man – one who can take on responsibility and deliver on it, one who lays down his life in the service and protection of the women and children in his life." He seems to be able to motivate and inspire in ways I would never think of and in a way I probably never can.

But Daddy Magic is not only for our sons. It also reveals its wonders in my husband's relationship with our daughters. When feminine tensions between mother and daughter are strained, Daddy Magic speaks to the heart of the emerging young woman: "You are a delight to me! You are beautiful in my eyes – my cherished, irreplaceable daughter! Let no man even think about harming you. I would lay down my life to protect you and you should expect no less from the men who would seek to love you. I believe in you. I trust in you. I have confidence in you." And he doesn't even need to use these precise words – this liberating and feminising message is conveyed to our daughters in myriad ways through countless interactions.

Clearly it is not beyond a mother's capability to articulate these life-affirming messages – but the message is not only in the words, it is also in the person of the messenger. In the same way that the CEO saying "good job" has greater impact than the same words from a junior assistant, so also is there a difference in the credibility of the message when it comes from the father. These messages delivered from one's father carries a gravitas that has a life-long impact; boys become men of integrity and valour, girls become women of grace and courage.

And so dear fathers, we honour you for your presence in the family. Know that your lasting influence on your children will be your most valuable legacy to the world. Know also, that no matter what your inadequacies to date, there is always both a capacity within you, and a need, for that 'daddy magic'.

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