

Dad: A Son's first Hero; A Daughter's first Love



This evening's reflection honors Dads. ... A Son's first Hero; A Daughter's first Love. I'd like to open with a factoid I found on MentalFloss.com:

Halsey Taylor invented the drinking fountain in 1912 as a tribute to his father, who succumbed to typhoid fever after drinking from a contaminated public water supply in 1896.

Since the Middle Ages, Father's Day has been celebrated in Catholic Europe on St. Joseph's Day (March 19). What better role model is there than St. Joseph, the *Nutritor Domini* ... 'Nourisher of the Lord.' And like many fathers, his role and nature can only be deduced from a few brief stories.

Even though we have no words spoken by Joseph we can deduce that he was a righteous man who demonstrated the virtues of compassion, courage, faith, and devotion to his family. He embraced Jesus as his own son, loved him dearly, taught him carpentry, and raised him as a faithful Jew. He demonstrated his great faith and obedience to God by taking the pregnant Mary as his wife. He provided for her and his adopted son, making him the patron of fathers and families.

From Joseph's example, it is easy to see why Father's Day celebrates and honors fathers, fatherhood, paternal bonds, as well as the influence of fathers in society. How it came to be celebrated on the 3rd Sunday of June is a story in its own rite.

The Catholic Church has actively supported the celebration of fatherhood on St. Joseph's day since somewhere between the end 14th

and beginning of the 15th century, probably upon the suggestion of the Franciscans. It was not adopted as a public celebration in the U.S. until the 20th century, to complement Mother's Day.

After Anna Jarvis successfully promoted the first Mother's Day celebration on May 10, 1908, the first observance of a 'Father's Day' was held on July 5 of that same year.

On June 19, 1910, Sonora Smart Dodd sponsored a Father's Day celebration at the YMCA in Spokane to honor her Civil War veteran father, William Jackson Smart. Several other local clergymen accepted the idea, and on June 19, 1910, the first Father's Day, "sermons honoring fathers" were presented throughout the city. The local custom faded, and was not revived until Dodd returned to Seattle in the 1930s and promoted the celebration at the national level. Debate over nationalizing the holiday continued through several presidencies until 1966 when President Lyndon B. Johnson issued the first presidential proclamation honoring fathers, designating the third Sunday in June as Father's Day. Six years later, Father's Day was made a permanent national holiday when President Richard Nixon signed it into law in 1972.

I opened tonight's reflection with the iconic image that Dads are a son's first hero. I came across a true hero's story during my preparation for this reflection:

Dick Hoyt has pushed and pulled his son Rick, who has cerebral palsy, through hundreds of marathons and triathlons. Rick cannot speak, but using a custom-designed computer he has been able to communicate. They ran their first five-mile race together when Rick was in high school. When they were done, Rick sent his father this message: "Dad, when we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!"

Can I get an 'Amen!'