

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

4th Sunday of Lent | For Sunday, March 31st, 2019

## Our Father Waits With Open Arms

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa, BSC

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32



Fatherhood, in today's current cultural climate, can be a hotly debated topic depending on who you are listening to. The mere notion can bring up difficult feelings and memories for some, and for others, it can bring about the opposite.

I can't help but think that maybe General Douglas MacArthur had an insight into the heart of fatherhood that many of us might have forgotten. MacArthur's confidant and biographer, Maj. Gen. Courtney Whitney, notes that Gen. MacArthur penned a prayer for his son at some point during WWII when he was stationed in the Philippines. The prayer reads:

*Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.*

*Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a son who will know Thee — and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge. Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail.*

*Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.*

*And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the weakness of true strength.*

*Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain."*

So many times when we read the all-too familiar story of the Prodigal Son, we focus on the action of the rebellious son — and rightly so because it is so easy to identify with him. We can lose sight of the character of the father. The poignancy of the son's story is so only because of the magnanimity of the father.

I love Mc Arthur's prayer because it gives me insight into the heart of fatherhood. What kind of a father prays a prayer like this for his son, even after the inheritance has been given and squandered? What kind of a man does it take to even utter a prayer like that ... being charged with the grave responsibility to teach his son to become a man like that despite his own weakness and limitations? Who is this son to become with a father like this?

Fatherhood, in this context, is an adventure to dare great things beyond what we think is possible. Only in the light of the magnanimous character of the father can we begin to understand the meaning of his actions towards both his sons and the dignity conferred on each of them. How desperately we need to rediscover this in today's world.

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## PRAYER

Create in my son a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within him (Ps 51:10).

May my son walk after You, God, and fear You and keep Your commandments and obey Your voice. May he serve You and hold fast to You (Dt 13:4).

May my son be strong and courageous and not fear or be in dread, for it is You, Lord, our God, who goes with him. You will never leave him or forsake him (Dt 31:6).

May my son walk before You, God, as King David walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that You have commanded him, and keeping Your statutes and rules (1 Kgs 9:4).

Like Timothy, may my son be an example to believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity (1 Tm 4:12).