



In God We Trust to Give Children Their Wings

Deacon Terry Taylor

“In God We Trust” has been the theme of the parish for several months. We’ve been reflecting in order to better understand how God is at work in our own lives and in the world around us and how we might be called to cooperate with this work.

Last weekend we celebrated the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. It reminded me of our newest grandson, Liam and his family. It’s our daughter and son-in-law’s first boy. As I thought about the birth of Jesus as well as of Liam, it drew me back to the birth of our first child, Michael. Baby gifts and flowers poured in from our giddy circle of family and friends. The whole household revolved around this precious little new life. We even required that all visitors wear surgical masks before they held Michael. This lasted several days until our free supply of masks was gone. Everything we did focused on the protection, love, and nurture of our new baby. We received many notes and cards of congratulations but the one that stood out was the one we received from my wife’s godparents. It simply read:

There are only two real gifts we give our children; one of them is birth, and the other is wings.

We stared at that card for a long time. As we listened to the gentle sound of Michael’s breathing, we began to realize that this child did not belong to us alone. This baby was not our possession. Yes, we had a profound responsibility to protect and nurture and raise Michael. But we also began to realize for the first time that our parenting would be measured just as much by how successfully we launched him into adulthood. As much as we wanted to hover over Michael like birds brooding over their nest, the final test of parenting would be to teach him to leave the nest – for us to trust in God and to give him wings.

In the Gospel read last weekend, we saw an example of the gradual process of parent-child separation in the life of the Holy Family. This is a childhood snapshot recorded in the pages of scripture from the family album of Jesus at home with Mary and Joseph. Jesus is twelve and he’s at the Temple where his family went at least once a year for one of the major religious festivals. His parents

have inadvertently left him behind at the Temple as they returned home. It’s like a twist on the movie, “Home Alone”, where the young boy was left at home while the family went on a trip..... I can relate to this! Our Michael, as well as our other children, always seemed to get lost in the supermarket, amusement park or at a parade. “Take care of him/her, O Lord. We can’t do this alone!” Yep, it took some trusting in God.

The “getting lost stories” – terrifying when they happened, have become favorite humorous stories now told and retold at our family gatherings decades later.

Maybe Jesus was one of those children who tended to wander off on his own, a bit more independent than some other kids. But all of us can certainly hear the fear and exasperation in the voices of Mary and Joseph as they arrived breathless back at the Temple in search of their missing child. But the point of the story is found as Mary and Joseph discover that Jesus was uniquely “at home” in God’s house. This was not a case of a child “lost from home: by his family, but a child “found at home” by his larger family. I suspect Mary and Joseph must have known that it was time to loosen their grip even more. Jesus like all children had been born with wings!

Our daughter will likely read this reflection, and so to her: There are just two real gifts you can give your son; one of them was birth, and the other is trusting enough in God that you will give Liam wings!



This is another in a series of reflections on our parish theme that will be written by our parish pastoral ministers.