FATHER’S DAY SPEECH

FOR

YVON ST MARC

REVISED

Good morning. It is a privilege to be here to share some thoughts with you as we celebrate the most important men in our lives, fathers. Whether they are physically near or far, emotionally present or absent, filled with faith or doubt, no one can deny the sense of power and the strength that fills us as we think of Father.

There is a Mayan Indian proverb that teaches us,

“In the baby lies the

Future of the world.

Mother must hold the baby close

So that the baby knows it is his

World but the father must take him to

The highest hill so that he can see

What his world is like.”

To all of you here today, Happy Father’s Day. Whether we’re father or son, uncle or brother, we have all been touched by the presence of a father figure in our lives, and whether he was there too much or not enough, today is the day we honor his presence, his memory, his impact and his legacy. With regard to our religious practice and the sanctity of the church, our father figures-ministers, deacons, priests, all watch over us and guide and inspire us to find the inner strength so necessary in order to live meaningful lives. The Mayan proverb reminds us of how the mother’s role is to nurture and it also acknowledges the father’s role in providing a vision of what the world is and what the future will bring. Father’s Day acknowledges the man that sacrifices for us, provides for us, disciplines us, and teaches us. He teaches us how to play, how to learn, and how to find our faith.

It is believed that the first thoughts of celebrating fathers originated in Spokane, Washington in 1910 by Sonora Smart Dodd, to acknowledge her father who was a Civil War veteran and single father of six children. It is important to recognize that the earliest celebrations of Father’s Day were rooted in religious services and today we honor that legacy. Although Mrs. Dodd’s service took place in the YMCA, it was led by the pastors of the local church and held on June 19th, 1910. A few years earlier, in 1907, the Menongah Mining Disaster in Virginia killed 361 men. 250 of them were fathers. Thousands of children in Menongah were rendered fatherless. At the time of the disaster, Grace Golden Clayton was mourning the passing of her own father, Methodist Minister Fletcher Golden. Mrs. Clayton had the idea to celebrate fathers in a “Father’s Day” service to be held close to her father’s birthday, and so the first Father’s Day celebration in Virginia was held on July 5, 1908. No matter who claims the actual first “official” Father’s Day, a couple of points are clear: Fathers need to be acknowledged and celebrated, and it is no coincidence that the church is at the center of the celebration.

Someone once told me this story, “One night a father overheard his son praying. “Dear God, Make me the kind of man my Daddy is. Later that same night, the father said his prayers, “Dear God, make me the kind of man my son wants me to be.” My father was (**name your father**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He was a deacon who devoted his life in spiritual support of others. He did his best as a father and as a deacon; he worked tirelessly as a source of strength, faith, and conscience for his congregation. He touched many lives. He guided me through life and faith and helped me to know God. I am proud to be his son and he lives on in me. Hebrews 12:7 teaches us:

 “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?”

We are all the children of God and as he guides our way, I think of my father. There are so many lessons I’ve learned and memories I have of my father. As he disciplined, he also made sure to encourage me when I deserved it. He guided me as I cultivated different interests as a child. I can honestly say he knew me better than I knew myself, and as I get older and see life from new angles and challenges, I see his reflection in my gestures, reactions, interests, and in my belief in the human spirit. Whether I liked his choices or not, he knew what would be best for me. He worked tirelessly to make sure our family was cared for, and he taught me the lessons that make life worthwhile and precious. I remember being so proud to see how the congregants in church greeted him with respect and he always demonstrated his faith in humanity and in me. His dedication to his faith inspired me to find that faith and connection to God within my own being. The word “deacon” is a Greek word that means “messenger, “waiting man,” or minister.” There are no accidents in the world, and it is no coincidence that those words so aptly describe my father. He was a messenger for the Lord, he was a patient and respectful man, and he made sure his personal ministry and message impacted, inspired, and supported all with whom he came into contact.

I’m a very blessed person. The greatest gift I ever received came from God and that was my parents. My mother is wonderful and my father was exceptional. He gave me the strength to stand on my own two feet and the wisdom to make sure those around me are able to do the same. He brought out the best in me… and I will consider myself very successful if my legacy is even half as honorable as his is. To all of the fathers being honored today, congratulations. Remember the impact your father has had on you-how he’s inspired you to live a Godly life and how you, in turn, spread the word to those who look to you for guidance. Never forget your place in the circle of life and as you honor thy father, honor thy son as well. Thank you all and have a happy, healthy and blessed Father’s Day!