

St. Joseph as our model

Ask my wife and she'll tell you that it's not necessarily in my nature to share – not the remote, not the covers and certainly not my feelings and concerns. Regarding the latter, I'm sure this is not an uncommon trait among men, as most of us aren't fond of strapping on a metaphorical headlamp and exploring the dark crevasses of our own fears and insecurities, let alone giving someone else access to the mineshaft. It's scary down there, and thick with cobwebs.

Also, like most men, I have a terribly strong yet terribly misplaced confidence in my ability to diagnose and treat my own maladies – physical and mental – so I'd rather tinker with my own issues before burdening someone else with them. Now, for the sake of simple math, multiply all of this uneasiness about sharing by a factor of 10 when it comes to discussing our faith lives and you see the challenges.

But lately I've taken a step or two outside my comfort zone and have been meeting weekly with a small group of friends – all Catholic men who, like me, are trying sincerely to live the Faith in their daily lives.

While each of us has taken a different path to faith and are in different stages of our journeys, we share some key demographics: We're all in our mid-30s to early 40s and are married with young children. I'm not breaking any confidences when I say the main concern in all of our lives is how we are handling our roles as Catholic husbands and fathers. And so, we discuss the joys and, especially, the challenges of being a husband and father in today's culture. Are we modeling the virtues we're hoping to see in our children? Do we love our wives like Christ loves the Church (see Eph 5:25)?

The answers, invariably, are “no” – at least, not to the best of our abilities. Too often we seek what will make our lives

easier instead of what will make the lives of our family members better, or we spend our time not embracing the needs of our wives and children but on our own needs – the game on TV, digital friends on social media or avoiding the chaos in our quiet retreats (be that the basement or the bathroom).

Thankfully, God has given us fathers and husbands an excellent model to follow in St. Joseph, to whom we should pay special honor during this Year of St. Joseph. While the father of Jesus doesn't play a large role in Scripture, his immense faith as head of the Holy Family should serve as inspiration to us all. From his devotion to Mary upon the news of her pregnancy, to protecting his family during their exile in Egypt, Joseph not only cooperated fully with the will of God, his faith was strong enough to hear God's voice in the first place. May we all be so faithful.

Vince Lombardi, who coached the Green Bay Packers to two Super Bowl titles in the 1960s, is credited with one of my favorite quotes. He said: "Gentlemen, we are going to relentlessly chase perfection, knowing full well we will not catch it, because nothing is perfect. But we are going to relentlessly chase it, because in the process we will catch excellence."

My friends and me? We're not Joseph, and we aren't anywhere close to achieving perfection. But we've reached the point in our lives that, out of love for our wives and our children, we're willing to chase it in order to catch excellence. Even if it means we have to leave our comfort zones.

St. Joseph, pray for us!