



My Father

By: Father John Catoir, JCD - 6/2/18

The two greatest gifts my father gave me were his love for my mother, and his faith in Jesus Christ. His love gave me the essential emotional security I needed growing up. It provided an atmosphere of emotional comfort and peace.

His faith gave me to a solid foundation of knowledge concerning the supernatural world. From this I found my purpose and direction. I was never a pious kid. My vocation didn't dawn on me early, but I accepted the idea of heaven, and knew that I wanted to end up there.

I remember my first Holy Communion as a joyful occasion. No doubt it set the stage for my life long vocation, but as soon as I became a teen, I didn't want to be a priest, I wanted marriage and a family. It took time to arrive at self-understanding.

My Dad's father died when he was two. He was raised by a single mother who came from Ireland. She raised him working as a chambermaid in the Commodore Hotel. He attended St. Steven's Catholic School on 29th St., where, coincidentally, I lived in residence many years later while I was Director of The Christophers. I remember looking down from my rectory window on the school yard where my father played as a child.

Dad only had two years of high school before he went to work as a brick layer. He met my mother at a parish dance and they married two years later. New York was prosperous in those days and he was earning good money. Then came the market crash in 1929. He lost his job and was still out of work when I was born in 1931.

He managed to get an entry level job at Metropolitan Life and soon became a book keeper. He was the head of the Authenticating Department when he retired.



We had fun. I remember when I was about three, he had me step on his right hand, and then he'd raise me up over his head, and parade me about the beach. I felt ten feet tall. He taught me how to fall on his other arm, promising me he'd never drop me. And he never did. I think that experience taught me to trust God the Father as I was growing up.

In those early years, after my sister Cathy was born, he got a second job as a house detective at the Roosevelt Hotel. He worked incognito at evening parties and was always ready to take out unruly guests if trouble arose. He worked these two jobs for many years to make a comfortable home for us.

We had many father-son talks as I was growing up. Thinking back and realizing that he never knew what it was to have a father of his own, he must have learned his fathering skills by instinct. Even so, he did a splendid job.

My wonderful mother died in 1957, and Dad was severely grief-stricken. By that time, I was in the seminary having already served two years in the Army. I'm nearly 87 as I write this article, and I still miss both my parents.

How blessed I am to have shared in the love of a great father and mother. Thanks be to God.