

SFailure to Witness

2 Samuel 13:23-29

Embrace the Father's love this day.

How can you show this love to those in your care?

You are in David's chaotic household. King David's sins, in particular his neglect of his children, had disastrous personal and national results. This reminds us to cherish the gift of spiritual fatherhood.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

After two full years Absalom had sheepshearers at Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. And Absalom came to the king, and said, "Behold, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant." But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you." He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. Then Absalom commanded his servants, "Mark when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Fear not; have I not commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled.

Reflection

The deadly sin of sloth sows a fundamental interior disorder that also extends to exterior life.

David's sins now begin to destroy his family and his kingdom. Absalom bides his time, waiting for the opportunity for revenge. Meanwhile, Tamar has been shut away in shame in Absalom's home, and Amnon has gone on his merry way for two years with no support or guidance from his father. By his failure to act, David has unwittingly illustrated three key aspects of spiritual fatherhood:

First, a father bears witness to the absolute, infinite, and unconditional love of God. David bears witness to nothing; he only gets angry. David

failed to invite Tamar to trust in God's love. David failed to accept Absalom's invitation to join him in celebration. If David had bothered to spend some quality time with Absalom and the sheepshearers, perhaps he could have influenced him and prevented the murder of Amnon. He also failed to show Amnon how to make amends or even how to pray for forgiveness. David did not proclaim God's mercy, even though he had experienced it: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love." (Psalm 51).

Second, a father bears witness to hope, trusting in the plan that God has for each person. Spiritual fathers patiently bear faith-based hope that "all things work together for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28). Spiritual fathers empower their children to move forward in life without anxiety. Spiritual fathers remind their children, "You are loved, and you are capable of loving." David, however, leaves Tamar, Amnon, and Absalom with no hope for the future, with no sense that they are loved or capable of loving in the future. So, Tamar shuts herself away in despair. Amnon remains frozen in unrepentance. Absalom waits for a chance to take matters out of the hands of God and David and into his own.

A father, thirdly, speaks the truth that opens his children to the demands of reality. Spiritual fathers do not leave their children in delusion or ignorance. Spiritual fathers never say, "Well if it makes you happy..." Still, David says no word to prevent Tamar from going into seclusion, Amnon from remaining in his sin, or Absalom from seeking revenge. David is angry, but he remains silent.

How do you bear witness to God's love and mercy? Who are the persons in your life who really know and trust in God's love and mercy? To whom do you need to speak the truth in love?

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.