

# Remembering Dad....

There's a picture on the desk in my living room of my dad holding me up as an infant. I'm smiling and he has a look of pride on his face.

As his first born he and I shared a special relationship. He loved to whistle and as a toddler I tried—often comically—to imitate him. He was in the Navy when I was a preschooler and I ran into his arms as he scooped me up when he came home on leave.

Dad loved books and education. Once I was in school, he encouraged me to do well—college was always a given in my future. He'd look over my homework and give me feedback. One time when I wrote a Christmas essay, he suggested that I write that Jesus was born in a "stinking" stable because that would have been the reality. The good sisters were horrified. If I were writing that essay today, I would still include that phrase.

As a teenager I got involved in civil rights and when we would talk about justice issues he would play the devil's advocate and take the opposing position. I later learned he shared my views when he talked with others.

Men of his generation had a difficult time sharing feelings. I remember one time being at his house and talking to one of my children on the phone. "Love you," I said as I ended the call. "What's with all this 'Love you'?" dad asked. "They should know that you love them." Then he turned to me. "I love you," he said. After that each time we parted he would turn to me, grin and say, "Like you."

In the final years of his life, he and I would walk the treadmill together and talk, often on deep subjects. I remember a few weeks before he died he asked me, "What do you think happens after you die?" "Why don't you talk to God about it?" I suggested. "God doesn't talk to me," he replied. "I think God is very pleased with how you lived your life and how you loved your family and others,"



I told him. "He's never told me that," Dad said. "Maybe he's telling you now through me," I said softly. "Love you," Dad said. It was the last real conversation we had. He died a few days later.

These memories come to mind and are especially poignant as my dad died 10 years ago this month. Fathers have a huge impact on how we interpret the world and especially how we see God. I know my father did.

My spirit smiles when I see my son and son-in-law interact with their children. I remember once when my oldest grandson was a toddler. His dad was out of town and I was helping his mom. I was putting him to bed and hoping to get him asleep before Joe got home from an evening flight. Sam was drifting off when he heard a door open downstairs. He perked up. "That's my Daddy," he shouted. Bed time was late that night. Simon, who is a person with autism, also has a close relationship with Joe and feels safe and enjoys spending time with his dad. My twin grandsons Josh and Zack love being with Mike who plays with, reads to, snuggles with, and delights in them. Seeing God as a loving father will not be a problem for any of my grandsons.

St. Leo's has been blessed over the years with priests who have mirrored God's love. Our many children line up to get a blessing from Father Jim as their parents receive Holy Communion. And despite their sometimes noisy and mischievous behavior, the children feel welcome and comfortable in church and see themselves as part of the community. I imagine that Jesus who showed us God as a loving father and welcomed children himself feels right at home here.

— Angela Anno

## DAY OF HOPE

Saturday August 17<sup>th</sup> Noon - 4:00pm

**Theme for the Day: Challenges for Youth: Bullying, Suicide, Peer Pressure**

- At **Wayne Playfield** by Mr. Gene's Doghouse on Beekman St. in South Cumminsville.
- 20+ social service agencies will be on hand to provide information.
- St. Leo joins with other churches and faiths and District Three of the Cincinnati Police Department in sponsoring this day.
- Free food and school supplies and agencies that provide services to our neighborhoods in a friendly atmosphere of faith and music.
- Children's activities.
- Bus Service from the Community Center at the Villages of Roll Hill to the playground and back periodically throughout the day.