‘Celebrating the Vocation of Fatherhood’ Archbishop of Washington Cardinal Wuerl: ‘The celebration of Father’s Day offers us an opportunity to reflect on the irreplaceable role fathers play in the life of the family, in society and in the Church’

Below is a reflection of Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, entitled ‘Celebrating the Vocation of Fatherhood’ published on June 17, 2018, on Cardinal Wuerl’s blog:

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The celebration of Father’s Day offers us an opportunity to reflect on the irreplaceable role fathers play in the life of the family, in society and in the Church.

In the creation story, we learn that the Lord intends for a man called to the vocation of fatherhood and made in God’s image and likeness to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:26-28). Here we find the origin of the family.

Scripture is filled with stories of the importance of fathers, and in their importance in handing on the faith in our heavenly Father. As Pope Francis points out in quoting from Psalm 78, God “‘established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.’ The family is thus the place where parents become their children’s first teachers in the faith” (Amoris Laetitia, 16). More recently, in his exhortation on holiness, he urges fathers and grandfathers: “Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus” (Gaudete et Exsultate, 14).

Pope Francis invites us in a particular way to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of “those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families” (Id., 7). What he then adds about the holiness of mothers growing in small gestures applies also to fathers – such as in sitting down with their children and listening and engaging with them after a long day of work even though they are tired (cf. Id., 16).

In families, “men play an equally decisive role in family life, particularly with regard to the protection and support of their wives and children,” the Pope affirms. “Many men are conscious of the importance of their role in the family and live their masculinity accordingly” (Amoris Laetitia, 55). More specifically, fathers teach what nurturing, compassion, and mercy look like in an explicitly masculine expression. Children, through the experience of the love of their earthly

father, more easily recognize and trust as well the unconditional love and mercy of their heavenly Father.



Today is a day to give thanks to all of the fathers and grandfathers in our families and communities who strive to care for their children to the best of their ability. We express our heartfelt gratitude for the time spent working to provide for the material needs of the family and the time spent patiently with a child struggling to complete a homework assignment or recovering from a nightmare or making a big decision. For all the gifts of these good men who are living, and in memory of these who have died, we give thanks to God our Father.