

Passionate, Praying Paternalism

By Paternalism, I mean being a father or dad; and I have come to realize that passion and prayer must follow
- Dad

Our circumstances and struggles of life bring the opportunity to learn and to grow. Even as parents, and as the paternal parent in my case, this opportunity has never been greater than in the long alienation from natural children. Passion and pray have been the outcome and practice of this struggle; and along with that, much writing to include the basis for writing at all. There is power and passion in prayer; and if understanding this outcome results from a great struggle - as it often may - than read-on that you may know, be reminded and be encouraged by the passionate prayer of paternalism.

I am a dad who has four natural children; and while many dads in our land may have access and even authority in their

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children' lives, I am alienated from mine. This struggle was not always the circumstance; for I helped raised my children from their birth to the ages of 10, 8, 5, and 3 for Matthew, Abigail, Benjamin, and Brian-Wesley, respectively. The struggle emerged during and following our divorce in 2000. As a footnote, divorce is not just the immediate dissolution of legal marriage but is the continuing destruction of a family - immediate, extended and generational. Please realize that that I appreciate *Divorce Recovery* - of which I have greatly benefited - or any similar program or promise for healing and restoration. Even with such resources for the divorced (parent and child), my conviction remains: divorce is destructive for all involved as well as the institution of marriage.

As with a war or battle, divorce has its guilty and innocent; and though seemingly convenient for the observer and even participant (to draw such lines), the demarcation of guilty and innocent is not clear and distinct, but is clouded and

confused - especially for the truly-innocent, the children. Whether the conflict (or developments of divorce) is characterized as a skirmish or a full-scale

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civil war, the child is the most vulnerable, the most at risk. To add a final comment in this analogy, divorce does not end with the legalities or what might be considered a pact of some sort; but continues to threaten the lives, marriages and families of the immediate innocent, children. As studies and surveys will attest, the adult-lives of children-of-divorce are forever changed - and though questionably for the better in some cases - certainly with the realization that marriage and family is for a season and not a lifetime.

I have never fought in an actual battle and therefore have never experienced or witnessed the trauma that can have lasting effects on the survivors - military and civilian. My understanding is very limited to the documentaries, articles and books of interest - to include the experience and aftermath for a society or individual. Given such limited understanding (of war) may seem to weaken my analogy to divorce; but on the fundamental similarity of the guilty and innocent, the experience and the aftermath, and other described similarities, I can offer no other closer description of divorce than war - yes, a never ending saga of loss that is carried on by the children and so on... With this analogy made permanent by my convictions, I press-on to the passionate prayers of paternalism.

In a favorite movie of mine, *Moonstruck*, the character by name of "Johnny" brings emphasis to his strong attachment to his dying mother by saying "...nothing can replace the family..." Given that the movie, or story, involves a family - and a season of love and death - makes such a statement seem all the more relevant. The family is going through a series of changes to include a marital crisis or infidelity - which I refer to as the tremors of war. In dealing with this discovery (of infidelity), the daughter is naturally upset with her dad but not to the point of

considering their divorce; yes, the matter is serious but is not without some hope of reconciliation and forgiveness. To the families' benefit (and probably the viewing audience as well), the marriage is preserved and the dad brought to the realization of what is truly important to one's life and legacy.

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At the risk of being sentimental, I consider the movie as just one example (of probably a few of contemporary movies about families and marriage) that give attention to the strength and worth of family over the *tremors of war*. Not stopping at the limits of the sentimental, the movie also includes a spiritual side that is evident when the mother and daughter unintentionally meet at the church. On bended knee, the mother is visibly and verbally worried that she is being cheated on - and the daughter is reassuring that her dad is faithful irrespective of what the daughter already knows by witness. What seems to be foundational to the virtue of this family is the mother's willingness or conviction to pray and wait through the *tremors* - and the eventual willingness of the father or "Pop's" to "go to confession" as a conciliation. The *tremors* pass and the marriage last - for *nothing can ever replace the family*.

With some thought of the mother's willingness and Pop's realization, I have been brought to the understanding that passionate prayer is essential - for I have no other means by which to express my paternalism than in prayer. With no contact and communication with my children - and scant knowledge of their lives - I am left with no other course but to pray; yes, to pray and to pray everyday.

On the power and passion of these prayers, I have to come to be more appreciative and reassured of my place however limited in my children's lives. No, I am not the dad that I thought I would be - hands-on and fully engaged; but am trying to be faithful to the virtue of this family against a crisis of its own. The *tremors of wars* that rise and fall, the events that have occurred and will follow,

and the relationships that have been damaged - but not destroyed - are not enough reasons to surrender the passion and power of prayer. In my paternalism - or more simply as a dad - I must not forget my children and the special times that we spent together. For the children need and deserve to know that are not forgotten, and perhaps are finding and will find healing and reconciliation through the passionate prayers of paternalism.

