

## THE MUSTARD SEED REVOLUTION

Father's Day got me to thinking about my father gone these past 37 years but still very real to me. When I was a lad I would invariably invite my dad to toss the baseball back and forth out in the side yard. I was always at a disadvantage because I had this "child's baseball glove" without a real pocket in it. My dad had a professional baseball glove and he caught everything. I did not. Invariably I would ask him if I could switch gloves with him so that I could catch better. And he always did. He would take my glove with the fat finger holes and no pocket and he would catch everything I threw at him and I would take his glove which was too big for me and I didn't really catch any better but I thought I did.

As my birthday rolled around I started to drop hints about what I wanted. "I would really like a brand new baseball glove for my birthday." Sure enough, the day came and there was this box all wrapped up, just the right size. I ripped off the paper and on the top of the box were the words, Spalding Sporting Goods. I just knew it! I tore off the lid and there inside the box was my dad's own glove.

Trouble is, I did not want my dad's glove, I wanted my own brand new glove, like my dad's glove. I remember taking the glove from the box looking at it and throwing it at my father and bursting into tears ran to my room. I don't remember how the rest of the story turned out but I think he killed me.

Many years later I am in the seminary and I am preparing for ordination. One of the last courses that you take is about confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You learn the theology and you practice both as penitent and as priest. In the course of one lecture the priest professor made the point that sometimes people will come to confess sins they have been carrying around with them for a long time. He indicated that there might be moments when we had the experience of something we had done in the past that was hurtful or sad. He encouraged us to go back to the person and tell them we are sorry for what we did. It completes the sacramental forgiveness. Not too long afterwards this incident came into my mind. I resolved that I would apologize to my father when I go home for the Easter break. I had gotten to the point where I realized how ungrateful and selfish my actions had been there.

I waited until it was just my dad and I watching a ball game. On a commercial I asked if he remembered how we used to play catch on the side year in the spring of the year. He said he did. And if he remembered how he had a good glove and I had a kid's glove that made it hard to catch. He smiled at the memory and nodded "Yes." I asked if he remembered how I would often ask him to switch gloves and again he said he did. I asked him if he remembered what he gave me for my birthday that year. He thought for a moment and said, "I think I gave you my glove." I said, "You did." "Do you remember what my reaction was?" He thought again and said, "You liked it." "NO. I didn't like it." "You didn't?" "No. I threw the glove at you and burst into tears and ran to my room because I didn't want your glove I wanted a brand new glove like your glove." "You're kidding." "No, I'm not. Cheese Dad you're making this tough. Here I am wanting to apologize to you for what I did and how I acted and you can't even remember it." "Steve, I just don't have any memory of that at all. Sorry son."

As I replayed that conversation in my mind later on it dawned on me that if my earthly father did not remember my sins, did not want to remember my sins, then how much more my Heavenly Father. But I thought more. My dad knew I was hurt. If he could have afforded it he would have gotten me a new glove but we couldn't afford it. He also knew me and that once I settled down I would be okay and I would use his glove and it would become mine and all would be okay. And in that moment he let go of the hurt and moved on. It was a choice like a thousand other choices. But it sowed a seed in me, his son. He taught me about being a man. Being a father is like that; making those choices, little mostly and some big but getting it right mostly.

I registered a family yesterday, a dad, his wife and three little ones 6 down to 18 months. I wished him a happy Father's Day and I mentioned that you have to make a lot of sacrifices as a dad. As he balanced his little daughter on his lap. He said very spontaneously, "I have made many sacrifices for my family but I have not lost one thing." You have to choose to believe that.

I watched my dad be there for my uncle's family when he left them. He was an anchor for them when they had none. I watched him take in my mom's parents in their old age. He cared for them until he himself died. He sowed little seeds of generosity, of reliability, of safety, of caring. And those seeds have borne fruit just like Ezekiel said they would. Just like Jesus said with the mustard seed. Jesus started a mustard seed revolution. Would you like to be part of that you men who are fathers and grandfathers and Godfathers? Me too. Then let us choose selflessness and let us choose virtue and take our place in the Mustard Seed Revolution. It is transforming the face of the earth. Let's be part of it.