

2nd Sunday in Lent

Cycle A-2026

In our reading from the book of Genesis, God enters into a covenant with Abraham and all of His descendants and promised they would be forever blessed. That got me reflecting on the biblical theme of how someone and their families could be blessed or punished from one generation to the next. For the longest time, I could not wrap my mind and heart around this issue, especially the notion of generational punishment. The longer I have observed and reflected on human nature, I believe I finally understand.

I will begin with the punishment and end with the blessing. Have you ever noticed that in families there can be a generational pattern of vices and brokenness? It may be a spirit of selfishness, being highly critical, pride, anger, control, fear, strong emotional walls, or a lack of trust. It may also manifest itself through a pattern of abuse, addiction, neglect, or a particular form of sinfulness. What are the patterns in our own families?

It is important to realize that God is not punishing families from one generation to the next. What is

occurring is that the sins and the brokenness of the father and mother are visited on their children, and then their children, etc. This can be intentional or unintentional, but hurting and broken people tend to hurt and wound others. Without personal and spiritual awareness, we keep on passing it down through the family line. We tend to think and feel in a similar manner to what we were taught or observed. We tend to act in the ways we were treated or witnessed.

Even though this is a common family dynamic, we can break the cycle. Our family influences do not fatalistically determine the course and direction of our lives. We may have strong inclinations and compulsions in that direction, but we are not doomed to have to repeat it. We are not doomed to pass it on. Therefore, we cannot use our family dynamics as an excuse to always justify and rationalize our behavior and decisions. We can break the cycle with the help of God and other people, regardless of our present age. It is never too late.

This brings to mind something I read several years ago. There was a father who was an alcoholic. When one son was asked why he was an alcoholic, he responded, "I observed my dad." When the other son was asked why

he did not drink, he responded, “I observed my dad.” Both sons were both exposed to the same alcoholic father but made radically different choices in their lives. One believed it was predetermined for him to be like his dad. The other believed he had the power to create another kind of life for himself. The same is true with how we have been wounded by the vices and brokenness of our family. We can go beyond them. We do not have to be defined by them. It may take time and patience to experience healing and deliverance, but the glory of our own transfiguration and new life can eventually be an exciting reality for us.

It may happen differently for each of us. For some of us, it may involve reading about healthy family dynamics, and how to experience inner healing. For others, it may involve individual or shared prayer for healing from our family dynamics. This involves asking God to deliver us from our own soul ties to the vices and brokenness of our family. We can seek to overcome our own spiritual bondage through the habitual reception of the sacrament of reconciliation. For others, it may involve a period of counseling and/or spiritual direction. It can even be a combination of all these things. The good

news is that we can break the generational cycle that we may experience as ongoing punishment.

On the other side of the spectrum, the virtues and holiness of father and mother can also be passed down from one generation to another. We see this in the family of St. Therese of the Little Flower. Check out this family background. She is a saint. Her parents Louis and Zelle Martin have been canonized as saints. St. Therese and her four sisters were all nuns. Her sister Leonia has reached the first step in being recognized as a saint by the church. This is truly a remarkable family. St. Therese's family may be out of our league, but they powerfully illustrate how virtue and holiness can be passed down from one generation to the next.

So, within our own families, how can we become a blessing and not a form of punishment? We can be a blessing for our families by diligently working toward our own inner healing and ongoing conversion of heart and life. We can be a blessing for our families by humbly asking our family to forgive us for the ways we have wounded them through our brokenness and sinfulness. Asking for, and granting mercy, has the power to set both us and our loved ones free.

I never realized the full depth of my own brokenness until my father and I, had a supernatural healing experience a few days before his death. I went over to visit my father and tell him about my 10th anniversary celebration that took place earlier in the day. He was too sick with cancer to attend the celebration. While praying for my dad with the Anointing of the sick, the Holy Spirit suddenly got a hold of him. He began to sob uncontrollably. Amid his crying, he humbly begged for my forgiveness for all the ways he had hurt and alienated me. Shedding a river of tears myself, I verbally assured him of my forgiveness. I also asked him to forgive me for all the ways I had hurt him and not been a good son. These words of mutual forgiveness were the last words we ever spoke to each other. Later that evening, he went unconscious and he died a few days later.

I am not exaggerating when I state that almost instantly, I felt like so many of my inner wounds were healed. All of sudden, I had a joy, peace, self-confidence, sense of identity, and a sense of wholeness, that formerly eluded me. I have come to view this moment of reconciliation as my father's farewell gift to me. It has been a gift that has kept on giving to this very day. They say that is what we experience when we enter heavenly paradise. Once

we cross that eternal threshold, all our pain immediately ceases, forever. I guess you can say I had an experience of heaven on earth. It was definitely a transfiguration moment in my life. It was truly a profound turning point in how I experienced and related to myself and the world around me. I realize how blessed I have been.

Some of you may have experienced the death of a loved one without the experience of reconciliation. I am here to tell you that even though they may be deceased, it is not too late to ask for or grant forgiveness. We believe that we are intimately united with those who have gone before us and have died in the friendship of God. If we take this leap of faith, they will be keenly aware of our blessing and receive it with great joy. In the process, we will be set free, and we will experience a new relational openness to them.

Fathers and mothers, you can be a blessing to your families by creating an atmosphere where God is loved above all else. Where loving God, learning about Him, talking about Him, and conversing with Him, is practiced, considered cool, and viewed as a top priority. You can create an atmosphere where the cultivation of love, mercy, truth, and virtue, is celebrated and revered. It is viewed as the ultimate purpose of life and the highest

form of achievement. You also lead the way by striving to model this for your family. You won't always do it perfectly but keep on trying with the help of God's grace and mercy. Taking an active role as spiritual leaders can be the greatest blessing you can provide your children. This is especially true if you exercise this spiritual leadership in a loving, balanced, merciful, and faithful manner.

Fathers and mothers, I invite you to claim your spiritual leadership and all the blessings it bestows on you and your family, from one generation to the next. You become an active participant in passing on a cycle of generational grace. It is not only your family that is better for it. It includes all the lives that you and your family touch. Therefore, it is not just a family generational blessing. It also becomes a generational blessing for both the church and society. It brings about its ongoing spiritual and moral renewal because the family is the foundation of everything.

I invite us to take joy in being a personal and spiritual blessing for our families, mindful that this blessing has the potential and power to reverberate from one generation to the next.

