**God’s Message to Fathers (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)**

 God has called fathers to be lovers of God, teachers of His Word.

 Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we celebrate today both the presence of fathers and graduates in our midst. Very often, on the occasion of Father’s Day, we think about our Heavenly Father, because He is the first and True Father over all of us. Today, however, we’re going to talk about our Heavenly Father’s call to his children, as to what their calling as fathers is to look like. In other words, what image should a God-loving father have? Today’s message will answer that question. God has called fathers to be lovers of God, teachers of His Word. Let us go on to the meaning of this call, then…

 The God-loving father lives by the Word of God. It is not an accident that we started our Scripture reading today with Deuteronomy 6:4. This first verse of our passage starts with the verb “Listen,” or, more literally in Hebrew, “Hear”. To have truly heard something, a command must be acted upon, in the minds of those living in that culture. For that reason, if somebody was only a “hearer” by their words, that did not mean that they were obedient to a given command.

 Deuteronomy 6:4 is call the “*Shema*” in Hebrew. In other words, the “Listen”. It is regarded as the most important commandment in the whole body of the Mosaic Law. It was so important that Jesus, even, considered it the first (and thus most important) commandment. As for loving God, which the 5th verse commands, it was supposed to be with one’s entire being. The heart, in Hebrew thought, was considered the center of “knowing”. A human being knew and made decisions with the heart and not the mind. The soul and “person” were the same word for the human being in Hebrew – it was the Hebrew word *nefesh*, which could mean person, soul, or even breath. As for strength, it is translated from a Hebrew word which means “a lot, plenty”. The original text says, “love the Lord your God with all your plenty”. In other words, love with all your material goods and also your non-material gifts.

After doing that, in addition to the personal relationship with God, men were supposed to teach their children that same love toward God. The Scripture says that fathers were to teach their children God’s Word by repetition. The subject was to be in their speech at all times. God’s commandments were to be remembered everywhere. All means were to be made available for God’s Word to be apparent (in its application) in the God-loving man’s lifestyle.

When God said to teach them “by repetition” (translated “diligently” or “Recite them” in English), we are invited to think of the image of a sculpture. Just as an inscription is hammered and chiseled into granite and does not fade, as parents, especially as fathers, we are to impress God’s Word upon our children’s hearts as well.

Perhaps we have questions about this teaching: Is it that *every* father is called to be a teacher to his kids? Is it not the woman of the house that creates an atmosphere of growth for the children? The Scriptures, however, consider the father as the representative of the Heavenly Father – as the one who makes the final decisions in the home – as the leader of worship in the family.

Today, as fathers, as much as we rejoice in the honor that God has given us to do the work of being a father and being an influential presence everywhere, yet we still have a responsibility. First, we are responsible for loving God with our whole being. Second, we are responsible for loving our immediate family by leading them in the Lord’s path. After that, our God-loving lifestyle will have already been having its effects wherever we find ourselves as men of God.

Dear brothers in Christ, rejoice that God has given you the opportunity to do the work of fatherhood. However, let us not forget that being a father is a responsibility – to love the Lord first, and to love the family, first our biological one, then our spiritual one, which is our church. Come and as fathers, let us love our Lord God. Come and let us as fathers teach our little ones.

Congratulations to all fathers. May God grant us His blessing that we may live in love and pass on that same love and faith to our next generations. The Lord bless you; Amen.