

**"I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."**

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**Once upon a time**, Jimmy Stewart, the famous Hollywood actor, wrote an article for *McCall's Magazine*.

He began saying that when he was a boy, the center of his universe was the *Stewart Hardware Store*. A monstrous, three-story building contained everything you needed to build a house, fix a car, or plant a garden.

But then, one day, it dawned on Jimmy that the center of the universe was not the store, **BUT** the man who ran it—his father.

Jimmy went on to describe what a big influence his parents had on him, especially his father. A good example of his dad's influence was an incident that took place just before Jimmy's bomber squadron went overseas during WW II.

As the moment of departure grew closer, Jimmy sensed his father wanted to say something special, **BUT**... the words never came out.

Finally, his father embraced him, turned, and departed. Only later, did Jimmy discover that his dad had slipped a letter into his pocket during his farewell-embrace. It read:

**"My dear Jim-boy, soon after you read this letter, you will be on your way to the worst sort of danger.... I am relying on the enclosed copy of the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm. The thing that takes the place of fear & worry is the promise of these words.... I can say no more.... I love you more than I can tell you. Dad."**

Jimmy then read these words of Psalm 91:

**"You will be safe in (God's) care; his faithfulness will protect & defend you....  
God will put his angels in charge of you to protect you wherever you go."**

The story of Jimmy Stewart & his father helps us appreciate something Jesus says in today's Gospel, which I just read to you from St. John.

The context for today's Gospel is Jesus' prayer for his disciples –shortly before his departure from this life. In prayer, Jesus says to his Father:

**"I consecrate myself for their sakes... that they may be consecrated in truth."**

These words are of profound significance, so I repeat them:

**"I consecrate myself for their sakes... that they may be consecrated in truth."**

The word **consecrate** means **to make holy**. So, we may rephrase Jesus' words to read:

**"I make myself holy...that my disciples may be holy."**

That phrase could well become the motto & the motivation of every person in this room & w/i the sound of my voice, whether we are parents presently or whether we hope to be parents someday.

So-o, I now rephrase Jesus' words to apply directly to parents:

**"I make myself holy... that my children may be holy."**

In other words, the best way to help children follow Jesus ...is for parents to follow him more closely, themselves! Stewart's McCall's article makes it clear that his inspiration to love God & to follow Jesus came from the fact that his parents loved God & followed Jesus.

The 1<sup>st</sup> & most important teachers of children are parents. Nothing can substitute for their influence—not the best CCD program in the world, not the best parish in the world, not the best school in the world, not the best friends in the world.

These all may contribute to a child's education, **BUT** they remain only secondary influences.

The great educator, Booker T. Washington, wrote in his autobiography Up from Slavery:

**“The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books & a costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with a great man or woman.”**

I now paraphrase his words to apply to **parents**:

**“The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books & a costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with a great father or mother.”**

If we are looking for a way to give others an **appreciation of prayer**,  
*we can do no better than become more prayerful ourselves.*

If we are looking for a way to lead others to **greater involvement in the Mass**,  
*we can do no better than to become more involved ourselves.*

If we are looking for a way to inspire others to **be more loving**,  
*we can do no better than to become more loving ourselves.*

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So, the bottom line: ‘What IS today’s Gospel invitation for us?’ you ask.

**Well,—I am glad you asked that question!**

Simply put...it is an invitation to imitate Jesus:  
Just as Jesus made himself **holy** ...for the sake of others,  
so, the Gospel invites us to make ourselves **holy** ...for the sake of others.

If we decide to respond to the this Gospel invitation,  
we will bring about a transformation,  
not only in our own lives, **BUT** also ...in the lives of all we touch.

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I now close with this prayer for others, most especially for our own families:

**Holy Father in heaven, bless ALL families ...as you blessed the family of your own Son.**

**Bless all families with the desire to seek you,  
with the patients to pursue you,  
with eyes to see you,  
with the wisdom to find you,  
& with a tongue to praise you.**

**Finally, bless all of us here & within the sound of my voice.**

**Bless us with a productive life,  
a happy death,**

**& a glorious resurrection to eternal life & joy...  
where every tear will be wiped away!**

Once again, may Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...  
the Father, the Son, & the Holy Spirit. Amen.