



## Wednesday Prayer

First Sunday of Advent – Shaping young men into true manhood

***“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.” Isaiah 64:8***

This verse for the First Sunday in Advent reminds me that God is always at work in our lives, molding and shaping us into who we were meant to be. It also reminds me of a quote by Robert Bly, from a men’s retreat years ago. He asked, *“When was the last time you admired a young man and told him so?”* It may be a small thing but how else are our boys going to know they are becoming men unless we see it in them and say how God is shaping His will in us?

Joe Ehrman, former linebacker with the Baltimore Colts, now devotes much of his time to raising healthy boys through the Representation Project. In the film, *The Mask You Live In*, Joe outlines three lies every boy learns growing up: 1) The first lie is associating masculinity with our athletic ability. Here size, strength and skills determine your value as a man. 2) The second lie is associating masculinity with economic success. Thus, the more money you make the more manly you must be. 3) The third lie every boy learns is to associate sexual conquest with masculinity. So, if you “score” in bed you have finally achieved manhood.

These are confusing and shallow substitutes for true manhood. And yet, there are few milestones in a young man’s life that help signal when he truly is “a man.” One thing’s for sure: just saying someone has “toxic masculinity” is going to get you nowhere fast. More labels are not helpful. What values and morals do we hope for and pray for our boys to have growing up?

Perseverance, honor, integrity, faith, bravery, gentleness and humility are just a few that come to mind for me. I’ve been wondering what kind of man God intends me to be for fifty plus years, and I’m still being shaped and molded as I go.

Here are a few questions posed by Pioneer Public Television in a series on rural manhood. Let’s dedicate ourselves to begin the conversation, to admire young men and tell them so. Let’s help our boys get past the lies the world feeds them and into the true manhood God hopes for them, one conversation at a time.

1. When you were growing up, was there a man in your life you wanted to be like?
2. When do you think you first became a man?
3. Is there anything you don’t talk to your male friends about?
4. Is there anything about yourself people might consider “unmanly?”
5. What do you think is the role of men in family & community life?

Let us pray for our role in shaping healthy young men.

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