



My thoughts this month are mainly directed to the husbands and men who may be reading this column. Recently, I attended a one-day men's conference, which included several speakers who gave excellent presentations. The conference provided the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and time for fellowship with other men from around the diocese. The conference closed with a Mass celebrated by our bishop. I attended with my son and my two brothers, which was nice because we had a chance to connect on a bit deeper level than we usually do at routine family gatherings.

Overall, it was a wonderful opportunity to focus on what a man's spirituality entails. I would highly recommend that any man take advantage of the opportunity to attend a men's conference if one is scheduled anywhere near you.

One of the speakers at the conference, who is a founder of a national Catholic men's organization called The King's Men (TKM), was particularly compelling to me. Having been on one of TKM's "Into the Wild" retreats, I was already familiar with his general message, one that men are called to be leaders, protectors and providers. His message is pretty straightforward and not complicated, so all can understand what we are called to be as Christian men. That is, we need to step forward and assume our God-given role in our family, our church and in the world. We are called to be leaders, particularly in our families. We are also called to be protectors, of our wives, our children and those in need. Finally, we need to be providers for the needs of our families, but in more ways than just the role of providing financial security. We also need to provide them the security of being loved and cared for.

This speaker related numerous examples of how we can live out our calling on a daily basis, including taking every opportunity to treat our wives with the respect and honor which they deserve. One of the simple examples he mentioned particularly resonated with me.

He asked the men in attendance a very simple question, "When was the last time you held a door open for your wife?" I think that many men in the audience sheepishly had to admit to themselves that it had been quite some time since they showed that basic courtesy to their wives. While I felt that I was pretty good about doing this for Mary Jo, as I reflected a bit more on this later in the day, I realized that I too had become a bit relaxed about this. I suppose that is easy to do after many years of married life. We can tend to take each other for granted. I thought that while I may have considered myself to be pretty good about holding doors

open for Mary Jo, perhaps I am called to do better than just “pretty good”?

I realized that there were times when it just was not convenient to get to a door ahead of her, perhaps because she was several steps ahead of me, so I simply did not hustle to catch up in order to get the door for her. I realized that as my wife, the one I pledged to love, honor and respect all the days of my life, she deserved better than just a “pretty good” effort on my part. She deserves the best I have to offer.

Okay, now you may be thinking, why is he making such a big deal over such a little thing as holding a door open for his wife? I know that it may seem like a very minor thing to remember and that there are many other more important tasks we as husbands are called to do. I do not disagree. But, perhaps if we begin to slip up on such little things, the simple ways in which we show our wives the respect they deserve, we are more likely to get out of the habit of doing the more important things for them also.

I suspect that many of us could think back on when we were dating or courting our sweethearts and recall how we always tried to be on our best behavior. Well, should we not remain on our best behavior even after 10, 20 or 30 years of marriage? I suggest that if we men stop to think about it, we would realize how blessed we are and how we should always be striving to do the little daily common courtesies which demonstrate our commitment to living out our marriage vows to love, honor and respect our wives.