

A Father's Love

Andrew had recently been diagnosed with a debilitating disease, but he wanted to fulfill his duty as a deacon and pass the sacrament. With his father's help, he did.

By Pauline Richardson

As the sacrament prayer ended, I raised my eyes and looked at the neat and reverent row of deacons receiving their sacrament trays to pass to the congregation. Moments later, my gaze fell on a young man who I knew was passing the sacrament for the first time. It was Andrew. He was dressed nicely in his pressed white shirt and tie. He stood tall with his shoulders pulled back and showed great care as he administered to his assigned rows along one side of the chapel. His father was standing right behind him and was still and reverent.

I watched Andrew carefully hand the tray down the row and then glance up at his father, who nodded with approval. After the tray was passed back to Andrew, a loving smile grew on his father's face as they advanced down the aisle together with quiet respect, carefully balancing the tray as they slowly stepped forward.

As I watched this father-and-son team pass the sacrament, I remembered that Andrew had been recently diagnosed with a disease called Friedreich's ataxia. It is a debilitating disease that seriously affects one's balance, among other things. This diagnosis brings with it a very

altered lifestyle. Many typical childhood activities would not be in this young man's future.

I remembered the sadness I felt when Andrew's mom, my good friend, found out about her son's condition. I had prayed I could somehow help her. Ultimately there was little I could do, but I knew she and her husband would rely on Heavenly Father to help them in their time of need.

As I watched Andrew and his father attentively move along the rows, I became overwhelmed with a sweet feeling of peace. I saw this gentle father steady his son's frail and wavering body against his arm and help him hold the tray. As they moved from row to row, the father continually gave silent nods of approval to reassure his son. Suddenly the imagery was too much for me and I broke into tears.

That day I witnessed an inspiring example of a loving parent leaning on the Lord to help him help his son and of a child leaning on his father for help. I also saw a deeper meaning of the sacrament, as I reflected on the sacrifice our Savior made for us so we could lean on Him through life's challenges. Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, support us every day as we struggle with personal,



BUILDING FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

“As a father, I wonder if I and all other fathers could do more to build a sweeter, stronger relationship with our sons and daughters here on earth. Dads, is it too bold to hope that our children might have some small portion of the feeling for us that the Divine Son felt for His Father? Might we earn more of that love by trying to be more of what God was to His child?”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Hands of the Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 15.

physical, or spiritual weaknesses. They are ready to steady us, strengthen us, and help us fulfill our duty.

Andrew wanted to fulfill his calling as a deacon in spite of his circumstances, and he dared to do something a little different from the other boys. He had his father stand right beside him to steady him as he passed the sacrament. I was especially thankful that I

could be in the room to witness such a sweet similitude of what our Heavenly Father and our Savior do for us.

It turned out that this was one of the few times Andrew was able to pass the sacrament. He overcame a tough challenge that Sunday, and I will always be thankful for the lesson I learned about courage, faith, and love. ■

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