

Musings



with Marta Kaminska

martakamynkova@wp.pl or news@roscommonpeople.ie

The modern father

A few weeks ago Father's Day was celebrated in both Ireland and Poland. I am writing about this topic now because unfortunately I completely forgot about it at the time!

I don't know how we came to celebrate Father's Day but I think that this day came about because a month earlier Mother's Day is celebrated. It's a pity that we don't just have 'Parents' Day', it would be easier for everyone to remember. Anyway, back to the topic and what exactly is a father in the current climate?

First of all, we have to think about the stereotypes. Father is the head of the family and mother is the neck. This is just half true because now all around the world we have a new model of family where all parents are working and live as partners. Decisions are made jointly, so it's time to challenge the stereotype and say that parents are now the head of the family and the neck position could be claimed by kids or even a stereotypical terrible mother-in-law! The role of father has been downgraded and instead of being the main player he has become a co-player, but yet, we can't forget about our nature. In my opinion, in the relationship called marriage, we need one person who, in any situation, will keep a cool head. By a cool head, I mean will remain logical, free of unnecessary emotion and suchlike. As we know from our lives, this kind of character is often found in a man's make-up. Women are usually full of panic and they make a mountain out of a molehill. So, just like that, the balance is maintained

between parents.

So how does the modern husband occupy the role of father? In my opinion, he's most important. A father, we can say, jumps to the top in the hierarchy of parents and occupies pole position. It's like that because he assumed some responsibility formerly assumed by the mother. For example, when a young mother tells the story of bathing her young baby, nobody bats an eyelid, but when a proud father talks of giving a bath to his young son or daughter, people consider him a hero. There are plenty of examples, but the fact is that fatherhood now has a different meaning. Father is not this person that cares about fire and hunting for mammoth, father is the person who changes nappies, makes baths, plays football and even sometimes screams! First of all father is a man at home and, as we know, home without a man is like Roscommon without the Castle.

So, I'm sorry about being a few weeks late, but best wishes to all fathers. I already rang my father (better late than never) and when I expressed my Father's Day wishes, he began speaking about the historical discovery of silver in Poland. He's a little weird, but that's probably the reason why I love him so much.

Dzie ojca!

Kilka tygodni temu, czy to w Irlandii czy to w Polsce obchodziliśmy dzień ojca. Pisze o tym dopiero teraz, bo wstyd się przyznać, ale jakoś mi to wypadło z głowy.

Nie wiem skąd wywodzi się to święto, i nawet nie chce mi się szukać odpowiedzi w skarbicy wiedzy jaką jest niewątpliwie Internet. Myślę, że dzień ojca powstał jako odzew na widniejący wcześniej w kalendarzu dzień matki. Szkoda, że nie istnieje coś takiego jak „dzień rodziców” – byłoby wtedy zapewne dużo łatwiej, ale pewnie wszystko przed nami. Czas jednak wrócić do tematu i zastanowić się, kim jest w dzisiejszych czasach ojciec?

Najpierw obalmy najstarszy stereotyp. Ojciec jest głową rodziny a matka szyją- trochę prawda i trochę nieprawda. Obecnie na świecie panuje model rodziny, w którym oboje rodzice pracują i na zasadzie partnerstwa (dla pokoju!) wszelkie decyzje podejmują wspólnie. Myślę więc, że pora zmienić to stereotypowe powiedzenie i nazwać raczej głową rodziców a szyją mogą być ewentualnie dzieci lub w skrajnych przypadkach jakaś natrętna teściowa.

Kim zatem jest ojciec skoro z pozycji dowodzącego zdegradowany został do pozycji współgracza? Ano tak to jest, że w związku zwanym dalej małżeństwem potrzebna jest osoba, która w każdej sytuacji zachowa zdrowe podejście do sprawy. Mówiąc zdrowe mam na myśli rozumne, bez zbędnych emocji i niepotrzebnych dyrdymałów. I tak to wynika z naszej ludzkiej natury, że te cechy przejawiają zazwyczaj mężczyźni. Kobiety skłonne są do

panikowania i robienia z byle sprawy wielkiej sprawy. Tak więc na zasadzie rodzicielskiego kontrastu wszystko sobie pięknie współgra. Jak więc ten współczesny mąż spełnia się w roli ojca? Ha moim zdaniem rola ojca przeskoczyła rolę matki. Już wyjaśniam o co chodzi. Ojciec wskoczył niejako na piedestał i w hierarchii rodzicielskiej zaczął zajmować pierwszą pozycję. Dzieje się tak za sprawą przejmowania niektórych męskich obowiązków. Kiedy na przykład młodzi rodzice opowiadają jak to matka kąpała wczoraj dziecko- nie wielkiego się nie dzieje, przecież to takie naturalne. Jednak kiedy dumny ojciec opowiada ze szczegółami jak kąpał malucha- urasta wtedy do rangi bohatera. I tak dalej i tak dalej przykłady można mnożyć w nieskończoność. Faktem jednak jest, że ojcostwo dzisiejszych czasów zyskało na znaczeniu. Tata to już nie jest ten co rozpala ognisko i taszczy mamuta na obiad. Tata to ten co przewinie, wykąpie, zagra w piłkę i czasem też pokrzyczy. No i przede wszystkim tata – to mężczyzna w domu, a dom bez chłopa to jak Roscommon bez zamku. Składam, więc wszystkim ojcom spóźnione najlepsze życzenia. Do mojego taty już dzwoniłam (lepiej późno niż wcale!) i kiedy składałam mu życzenia przerwał mi szybkim dzięki i zaczął półgodzinny monolog na temat historii wydobycia srebra w Polsce. Taki to już jest ten mój Kaziu i chyba właśnie za to go tak Kocham...

'Boiled chicken that would put hair on your chest'

Sometimes it's hard to see the wood from the trees and last week's announcement that the recession is over and suggestions that things are on the up again definitely falls into such a category. It was ironic that on the same day that we got such good news, we were also told that we have the highest number ever in this country signing on the dole. Almost a half a million people are currently unemployed, and it is highly unlikely that many of them (or their dependants) are overjoyed at the claim that we are back out of the depression.

We all know that jobs are the key to having a successful economy, and unless I'm living on a different planet, it seems that we will see more and more job losses in the near future and less and less new posts being created. Small businesses are under desperate cash-flow pressure as spending dries up. And despite being baled out to the tune of many billions of the people's money, the banks are making absolutely no attempt to help them out. So many of them have had their overdraft facilities taken away from them, without any (apparent) good reasons, and a lot of these businesses can't survive without having such facilities available.....

As more and more of them go to the wall we will have loads more people on three-day weeks, and full unemployment for many more. The difference, of course, is that as businesses such as Arramont and Land of Leather in Athlone (both of them furniture retailers which also happens to be my area of employment) close their doors, because they only employ a handful of people, there is no public outcry or even any statements from our politicians.

It is only when multinationals let go big numbers of employees that we get every politician jumping on the bandwagon, promising enquiries and tribunals and getting on to the IDA and other government agencies – usually it's a done deal and no amount of bluster will change anything or bring back any of the jobs. The trick, of course,

is to be seen to be doing something, even if it's a token and completely empty gesture – the funny thing is that a few jobs gone here, and a few more there, causes just as much human suffering, and with four small businesses going under every day, it's hard to see where the optimism is coming from.

Just today the 'Indo' has it that 4,000 jobs are under threat in the banking world – they do not include all the directors and 'big-wigs' who are still in their highly-paid places despite making such an appalling mess of our economy, but who, if Michael Noonan gets into power, will find themselves getting a six-month stay of execution before they have to go. It would be a move that would go down well with the general population.

Anyway, while I'm on a political rant, I have to agree with the correspondents who were critical of all the time given last week to the debate on stag hunting and dog breeding, when there are many more important matters that should have been discussed. Now I'm sure some people really do care but I would have thought that the aforementioned unemployment, all the HSE cuts, NAMA and even the unbelievable breakdown of law and order – particularly in relation to drug gangs and drug warfare – would be more worthy of our TDs' time than hunting and dog breeding. Obviously I'd be wrong! So as they get ready for their annual two-month summer break, starting tomorrow, I think, perhaps they may consider exactly how important deer hunting is in relation to the main job of running their country.

Anyway, on to entertainment, and my new friends 'Jedward' (I met them in Dublin Airport) lived up to the old adage that the show must go on when Edward suffered a suspected broken leg while performing in England over the weekend. Now most people know that the two lads put on a hugely energetic performance, but even though he was in bad pain and limping badly, Edward carried on and finished the set. Whether that was

a good thing or a bad thing it's hard to know, but fair play to the lads. They have learned quickly, but it's a pity for them that it had to happen just as their new single is about to come out to be followed by their debut album 'Planet Jedward'. They are also due on a nationwide tour in August, so please God he'll be back in full health in time for that.

From new friends to old and back in the mad days when I lived in Quarry House in Roscommon with Dinny Egan (who was the best cook I ever met, and whose boiled chickens would put hair on your chest) the other resident at the time was a young lad from Belmullet in County Mayo, called Michael Kelly.

The two lads worked in the Bank of Ireland up the town, and for a year or two we had almighty craic in and around the county town. Anyway, Mickey headed off somewhere, Dinny stayed in Roscommon and I headed off to a somewhat unstructured life in Creggs, and naturally enough we sort of lost touch. However the boiled chickens (and Irish stew) and pots of the best Ballaghaderreen spuds obviously left their mark on the Belmullet lad, because I believe he is the father of the new Sligo sensation, David Kelly.

As a Galway man I should be a little bit upset at what happened to us down in Markievicz Park on Saturday night last, but under the circumstances I am actually quite happy for Sligo. I take my hat off to Mickey and Eileen and am delighted for young David's success. For all of you who never ate a boiled chicken, or drank the soup left in the pot, you don't know what you are missing.

Finally for this week just to let you know that Lisa (our girl) and her fellow workers are in their fourth week in Tanzania, and, while things are very different there, they have settled very well. She has gone out with the flying doctors to remote parts in their tiny aeroplane, had to save a child whose parent has had done a home-made operation on the child's stomach, and, basically, has learnt a huge amount about a totally different

culture. Up to now they have been in a hospital that's way out in the sticks, with very little resources (except what Lisa and co. brought out) run by the Divine Word Missionary Priests, but from next week they are moving to a bigger hospital in Aresha, which is a town about the same size as Roscommon. I think they would prefer to stay where they are, but they don't have any choice.

Lisa (and I) would also like to say a big 'thank you' to Bina Harris and all who are involved in the Barrie Harris walk fund for a very generous recent donation to the VSA – it is most appreciated by the VSA organisation and such a sum can do a huge amount of good in Tanzania.

'Til next week
Bye for now



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