

Reflections

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36 – June 1, 2008

Respect Between Parents and Children

When a child is born, we love him/her because he/she is our child. But in reality, we love a small great mystery. We do not know what he/she is like.....what characteristics he/she has.....what will be his/her vocation? We do not know definitely what God has in mind for him/her. The truth is that we know nothing. From this reality, respect as an expression of our love for him/her comes forth.

What is the respect of the parents? It is an attitude of hopeful and benevolent consideration for what the child is.....for what the child can become.....for what the child should be.....according to God's will. According to the measure in which the mystery of that life reveals itself and which the parents discover, they will embrace him/her and will begin to guide him/her with respectful love. This demands of them an attitude of reflection and dialog on the reality of the child so they can discover the will of God for the child.

What must they then respect in the child? First is the **respect for the dignity** of the child of God and for his/her dignity as a person. Each child is a creature born from the love of God and of God's dwelling in him/her. Our deepest respect is directed to God and to His Presence in the child. God loves him/her as he/she is: as he/she is physically, with his/her human qualities, with his/her anxieties and desires, and also with those imperfections. We are to accept and respect him/her just as he/she is.

Secondly, that also includes **respect to the process of his/her growth and development.** It is an active respect which includes to stimulate, to support, to motivate and to understand that development. It is a respect which knows that the entire process is a search and a realization of that personal being which is unique, original and free and which must become our child according to God's will.

Father Kentenich, the Founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, exhorts accordingly: "We have to be careful when facing the mortal enemy of authentic respect: the model. Please, do not introduce models into education!"

The children are also bound to have the same attitude of respect toward their parents according to the divine commandment "honor thy father and mother."

The best way to earn this respect toward them is indicated to us my St. Matthew in his Gospel (7,12): "Do for others what you want them to do for you."

I think it is difficult to invent a wiser and more forceful principle than this. Applying it to our case: Do you want to be respected? Respect! Or, as Father Kentenich affirms: "as the educator gives respect, he/she will receive respect as an echo from the student."

When respect exists, that mutual consideration – in spite of and by means of the many faults – then family life is manageable, it's pleasant, it's marvelous. This respect must accompany all love because there is no authentic love without respect. According to Father Kentenich, today, respect is more necessary than love. The lack of respect for everything vital is a sickness of our times.

The human parents. If we want to experience the Kingdom of God here on earth, the human parents must be true parental authorities, reflections of God. What is needed are loving parents... generous parents, understanding and merciful parents.....as the Heavenly Father is with us. The question is whether we are up to that parenthood. What do we do if one of our children is going the wrong way? For example, what do I do if one of my children steals money from me or forges my signature on a check from my checkbook? Do I beat him/her? Or, what do I do if one of my single, unmarried daughters is pregnant? Do I throw her out of the house? What is my reaction when facing this type of situations? Is it a reaction of justice, violence, love? Am I capable of acting like the father of the prodigal son, that is, with incredible generosity.....with _____ incomprehensible understanding... with merciful love?

More parents of this type, of this greatness, are needed.....parents who can develop a new parenthood, a human and yet divine parenthood.

Questions for reflection

1. How is my relationship with my children?
2. Do I respect my children or do I only demand respect?
3. Do I consult the decisions with my spouse?

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