

Sunday, November 17, 2013

Fundamentals of Parenting (5)

Language of our children

The Bible invites us repeatedly to keep our words sanctified and edifying as children of God, such as **“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth...”** (Ephesians 4:29), **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt...”** (Colossians 4:6) and other verse. Therefore, it’s our responsibility to teach our children such language in dealing with others. They should be used to words that express gratitude, respect for others, and being apologetic when they make a mistake. Examples of such expressions: “Would you please...”, “Thank you...”, “I would be very grateful if you...”, “my apology...” etc. Moreover, all family members should use these expressions in their casual daily interactions at home.

First, although these expressions are generally considered typical manners that should be used in interacting with one another, I would like for us to look at them from a spiritual viewpoint in the first place. We should agree that Christianity is not merely a religion that attempts to modify the behavior of people to facilitate better coexistence with one another. Rather, it is forming a deep relationship with the Holy Trinity and to enter into a fellowship with Him to become the children of the heavenly Father, members of the body of Christ, and sanctified temples of the Holy Spirit. This deep faith and fellowship with the Holy Trinity will be, then, reflected on our behavior and Christianity becomes a living and practical faith. Similarly, we can say that it is important to teach our children these expressions in their interactions with others **not only as good manners and etiquettes, but also, and more importantly, as a proper spiritual conduct.**



Second, based on what we said above, behind these expressions we can see Biblical and spiritual virtues such as: Thanksgiving, kindness, appreciation, putting others ahead of us, admitting one’s mistakes and offering apologies to those we offended, respecting grownups for their age, knowledge, and experience, as well as many other Christian virtues. We saw this in the interactions of many Biblical characters, and above them all, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in interacting with the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the leper, and others. The book of Ruth offers examples: The interaction of Naomi with her daughters-in-law, Boaz encouraging the reapers regarding their work where he said **“The Lord be with you”** and they replied to him, **“The Lord Bless you”**, also the interactions between Boaz and Ruth.

Thus, we can see the importance of teaching our children to use these expressions in interacting with others.

Third, it is important to teach our children to use kind words that stems from the mind of Christ and the Biblical teachings. This is the responsibility of the parents at home and Sunday school teachers either in their lessons or in the activities with their students especially during retreats, conventions and camps.

Fourth, regarding the use of these expressions at home, some may see it as too formal to be used at home. I would say, if this language is not regularly used at home, the children will never learn it. This is not a formal interaction among family members but rather it should be the norm for the family interactions, and the prevalent language at home.

Lastly, parents should be a role model for their children in interacting with others by using kind words on their daily interactions. Even words of apology coming from the parents should not be perceived as lessening their status or belittling them, to the contrary it offers a role model to their children.

Fr. Marcos Daoud

frmarcosdaoud@yahoo.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL