

Sunday, December 1, 2013

Fundamentals of Parenting (7)

Hands lift up, Knees bent down, Eyes full of tears

The title of this series of articles naturally lends itself to the techniques of raising children, the most precious in our lives. However, since we are discussing Christian parenting, we cannot separate the mechanics of parenting on the one hand, and the important need of whole-hearted prayer that parents can offer on behalf of their children.

Deep prayers for our children open for us a path to their hearts so that they may accept from us what we are unable to get to them intellectually.

Poured out prayers for our children change and transform us, thus leaves a deep impression on them.

Continuous prayers for our children and their salvation must, one day, regardless of how far they may drift from or resist God, make them think about their precious salvation that continuously cause their parents to shed their tears.

Our prayers for our children, though doesn't strip them from their will and freedom, it gives a chance to the grace of God to work within their hearts. It also gives grace to the parents in the eyes of their children.

One of the most famous examples of parent's prayers that had a profound effect on their children: Saint Monica the mother of Saint Augustine. She shed many tears for his sake for many years, so his repentance was a perfect example for transformation. It modeled for us the change of a son who deviated in his belief system and conduct far from God. He became a saint, a bishop, and one of the most renowned church fathers who left for us a treasure of Christian writings and commentaries.

It is likely that Saint Monica admonished her son Augustine so that he may retreat from his blasphemous beliefs and his unclean conduct. He must have seen her praying for him. He resisted, and maybe even despised her, but listen to what he had to say about his mother in his confessions as he offered them a prayers to God after he repented: *"By this time my mother had come to me, having mustered the courage of piety, following over sea and land, secure in You [God] through all the perils of the journey. For in the dangers of the voyage she*



comforted the sailors... and assured them of a safe arrival because she had been so assured by thee in a vision [it seems that his mother had seen a vision that gave her assurance of save arrival to her son]. She found me in deadly peril through my despair of ever finding the truth... she had mourned me as one dead, but also as one who would be raised. She had carried me out on the bier of her thoughts, that You might say to the widow's son, "Young man, I say unto you, arise!" (Luke7:14)"

Some may complain about their children growing apart from God and the church, or even worse if their conduct deviates in many ways than one. Some may think that all the possibilities of bringing these children back to God and the church have been exhausted. Regardless of the causes and who is responsible for that deviation (although I wouldn't completely excuse the parents in the first place nor the church in the second place), nonetheless there is always an open door... Our sincere, humble, faithful and unceasing prayers is an open door, regardless how long they grow apart from and resisting to God. They will eventually see the arms of their heavenly Father open to them, so they return to Him, them heaven and earth both rejoice.

Finally I would like to quote one of the Coptic church experts in family counseling and parenting, Dr. Nabil Baky, regarding what our children need from us: *"Hands lift up... Knees bent down... Eyes full of tears."*

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