

Who Needs Fathers These Days?

By Fr. Munachi Ezeogu, CSSP

Pastor Benson has two little kids Andy 5 and Charlie 4. Benson tries to be a good father to his little boys. He is a handsome young man even though he is as bald as a vulture. One day, the whole family is busy preparing to honor a wedding invitation. Benson goes and shaves himself and goes on to dress up. He comes out a few minutes later and what does he see? Little Andy has gotten hold of his father's electric shaver and shaved a big express way right down the middle of his head. Benson is furious. He says, "Andy! Didn't I tell you never to play with my shaver. Now you are going to get a spanking you will never forget!" He was just about to administer the spanking when Andy looks up at him and says, "Wait till you see Charlie!" Benson and his wife are simply horrified when they go into the washroom and see their little four-year-old boy with all of the hair gone, looking like a little skinned rabbit. By this time, Benson is really furious. He grabs Andy and says, "Now you are really going to get it." Just as he lifts his hand and starts to bring it down, Andy looks up at him with tears in his eyes and said, "But Daddy! We were just trying to be like you!" Well, Andy did not get a spanking, instead he got a hug.

It is hard to talk about fathers and their roles in the family these days without sounding old fashioned. In a society where many of the icons and celebrities of society are single mothers, in a society where a woman could walk across the block to the fertility clinic and buy herself a child, in a society where fathers are charged and convicted for child abuse when all they are trying to do is teach their children the necessary lessons of life, one could as well ask, "Who needs fathers these days?" Today, Father's Day, it would not be out of place for us to remind ourselves that in spite of all the changes in society, the father remains a very essential figure in the ideal Christian family. This is not a global condemnation of singles motherhood since we know that many woman are forced into single motherhood by circumstances beyond their control. But we would like to remind ourselves today that the ideal Christian family remains that of father, mother and child.

So, who needs fathers these days? Children do. Today a woman can go to a sex shop and buy herself all the sex she needs. But the children have nowhere to go and buy themselves a father's love. This is what people often forget when they discuss divorce. They tend to look only at the interests of the man and the woman. But I think that the party is most hurt by a divorce is often not the man or the woman but the kids. Kids need fathers just as they need mothers. They need their fathers as role models as much as they need their mothers. A father's love is different than a mother's love, and the child needs both in the same way that our bodies need both proteins and carbohydrates in order to achieve a balance growth.

The crisis of fatherhood in the family contributes to the crisis of faith in our society today. Even though God is pure spirit and therefore cannot be male or female, the Bible usually presents God to us in the image of father. Jesus teaches us in the Lord's Prayer to call God "Our Father." Since we go from the known to the unknown, it stands to reason to say that the experience we have of our earthly father affects how we visualize our heavenly father. The crisis of faith in many young people today could be related to early life experiences in which the experience of a good and loving father figure was missing.

Let us pray for all fathers today that they may be more faithful to their duties in the family. Let us pray God to give them the moral strength and the economic wherewithal they need to become good role models that their children can always look up to. And for all kids who lost their fathers through divorce or death, let us pray that the heavenly Father of us all may show Himself to be their father in such a tangible way so as to fill the vacuum left by the absence of a visible father.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Ezekiel 17: 22-24

2 Corinthians 5: 6-10

Mark 4: 26-34

June 17, 2012

靈 修 生 活

耶 穌 的 比 喻

張 春 申 神 父

耶穌在公開傳揚天國來臨的生活中，以言以行完成祂的使命。在四部福音中，耶穌主要的行動是施行奇跡，而訓誨人群時應用了很多的比喻。馬爾谷福音只是記載了極少的一部份比喻，而瑪竇與路加福音中，保存更多的比喻。在講到今天福音中兩個簡短的比喻之前，我們先概括地說明一下耶穌的比喻。

比喻是我們日常談話與講解時常用的一種方法。最為基本的，是應用比喻，將一件比較複雜的事，說明清楚，使人舉一反三。比如我們不易懂悟天堂是多麼幸福，耶穌以喜宴來加以比較，於是人們會揣測天堂是得救的善人，大家聚合在一起，慶祝永遠的生命。不過比喻也不完全是為了說明一件比較難懂的事，有時事情本身並不難懂，可是如果應用一只比喻說來，能夠娓娓動聽，增加氣氛，產生深刻的印象。比如耶穌所講的浪子回頭的比喻，其內容主要的是天父的仁慈憐憫，可是透過這個有名的比喻，人人聽了都內心激動，天主慈愛的肖像活潑地出現在腦海之中。不但如此，比喻也具有暗示的作用，為了不便明說，可以應用比喻，使人心中自己有數。福音中好多比喻，耶穌用來同時向那些反對祂訊息的人，有所暗示。比如，同一浪子回頭比喻中，還有那個抱怨父親的長子，這是耶穌用來暗示經師和法利塞人，他們反對耶穌宣講天父仁慈憐憫，寬赦稅吏與妓女是多麼心硬呀！

總之，耶穌應用比喻宣講，含有多種作用。不過有關比喻的內容簡括而論，四部福音中所有的比喻，其主題都是有關耶穌宣講的天國；天國的來臨，它的性質與特點，它是罪人與貧窮人的喜訊，它的要求以及天國在末日的圓滿完成。由於耶穌只有宣揚天國的使命，比喻都講天國也是理所當然的了。

今天馬爾谷福音中的兩個簡短比喻，都與耶穌自己與祂宣講的天國有關。耶穌與祂一小撮的門徒，開始在加里肋亞宣講，由於他們出身都不顯赫，沒有受過當時的經師教育，所以不免有人嘲笑他們沒有自知之明，妄想完成超過自身能力之事；或者有人輕視這個蒼海一粟的小團體，決不能有什麼成就。那麼在這背景上，我們讀第一個比喻，便知道耶穌正在說明，天國來臨，發揚廣大，基本上是神妙莫測，屬於天主的能力，不是人能助長的。耶穌自己也只求：願祢的國來臨，願祢的旨意奉行在人間，如同在天上。祂只是接受天父命令而宣講天國來臨的訊息，至於天國怎樣實現在人間，是天父的計劃。不過耶穌也深知，既然天父派遣祂宣講天國，祂深知一定也會完成，如同種子自然生長果實，先發芽，後吐穗，最後穗上滿了麥粒。至於第二個比喻，在同一背景上，耶穌一方面承認自己的團體只是蒼海一粟，好像芥子一般。不過祂同時肯定，在天主救恩計劃中，接受天國喜訊的團體，會生長起來。這兩個比喻，我們今天看來，實在清楚地證明天國的發揚廣大之事實。

最後，耶穌每次應用比喻宣講，實在針對聽眾的生活情況，了解能力，同時也自然地引起他們的反應而產生生活上的抉擇。今天不少比喻，往往還會使人產生同樣效果，那麼在我們聽了這兩個簡短比喻之後，有什麼反應呢？

摘自「妙音送長風」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 二 年 六 月 十 七 日

則 17: 22-24; 格後 5: 6-10; 谷 4: 26-34