

EASTER 1975

Dear children of our and of God: C & K

Another Easter has rolled around already, and I must confess that more than anything else I'm overwhelmed by a sense of the many blessings we enjoyed the past year, to the extent that I'm virtually unaware of any recent misfortunes. So, after first thanking God for that, let me then say that that very realization prompts the subject of this Easter letter: resist complacency - keep trying - ever harder!

Before getting into the subject, I have two further confessions to add. The first concerns a re-found awareness that these letters are almost totally advisory. And nobody wants any advice, nobody listens to advice, especially unsought advice. When I was in my early 50's, I was seized by a compulsion of "I must tell my children this, I must warn my children about that!" Now, well into my late 50's, I realize that I can relax, that no one is listening - because, each one's fate is peculiarly, necessarily, and uniquely one's very own! As regards others, we can only hope, pray, and give good example. And the only further caveat I would add in this regard is that you really concentrate on your own children between birth and grade school! That's where it's at! Certainly with regard to forming children. As the Jesuits used to say, "Give me your child from one to six, and you can have the adult!" All of which is just a long way around to saying that I now realize that children rarely listen to parents between their (the children's) ages of six to, say, thirty-six! (But I'll keep on trying, anyway!)

The second digressory confession concerns my compelling desire to affirm your own worth most specifically in relation to your parents. For the longest time I felt inhibited by a fixation (of my own doing) that I could never hope to be the man my Father was - I could never surpass or excell him at anything - that he was either flawless, or his flaws were minimal, understandable, and even justified! I'll never forget the trauma surrounding my initial experience of having discovered my Father to be in error - beyond question in error - on a serious point. This impressed me so much that I can remember telling several of you about it early on - especially George (and do any of you remember?) - "Look children, I'm not perfect. I make mistakes. I'm often wrong!" Of course, I'd add that I was sorry I was wrong as soon as I realized it, and I tried to make amends for it, etc., but the point I wished to make was - "Look, I'm only still trying, even as I'm exhorting you to keep trying!" And now to this caveat I'd only add - YOU already are or can be better than I am! If I'm really a good Father, then you WILL be better than I am. Because the mark of a good parent/teacher is precisely that the child/student becomes better than they are! So, please don't prove me wrong (or a failure) by not keeping on trying!

So, here we are to the point of this Easter letter: God is with us - He is in us, and, like Christ on His way to His Calvary, we might often stumble and even fall, repeatedly, but we must be sure to keep His example before us, and - KEEP GETTING UP! So, when set-backs come, trials, adversity, pain, disappointments - just keep on trying. That is what God is asking of us. That's ALL He asks.

Finally, and most especially for our absent contingent, I enclose a copy of the Scripture we used at Charlie and Kathy's home-coming mass of Thanksgiving, plus my own interpretation thereof - just so you will all know what I had in mind: to grow is to change; and change often entails pain. So, if we don't some time hurt, well - maybe we aren't trying hard enough to keep on growing. In other words, once free of home, it is up to You to discipline yourself!!!

Til next time, LOVE ,GOD BLESS, AND HAPPY , HOLY EASTER!!!!!!

Mom & Dad

Mom and Dad

First Reading: (Ps. 127: 3-5) Anne

Behold, children are a gift from the Lord;
the fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
Happy the parents whose quiver is filled with them;
they shall not be put to shame when they contend
with enemies at the gate.

Second Reading: (Tb 11:17) Jack/Kappy

(Jack) Welcome, my daughter Kathy! Blessed be your God for bringing you to us daughter! Blessed are your father and your mother.

(Kappy) Blessed is my son Charlie, and blessed are you daughter! Welcome to your home with blessing and joy. Come in, daughter!

Third Reading: (Heb 12:2-3, 4-7, 9-11) John

Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith. For the sake of the joy which lay before him he endured the cross. In your fight against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood. Moreover, you have forgotten the encouraging words addressed to you as children:

*"My children, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord
nor lose heart when he reproves you;
For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines;
he scourges every child he receives."*

Endure your trials, as the discipline of God, who deals with you as children. For what child is there whom his father does not discipline? If we respected our earthly fathers who corrected us, should we not all the more submit to the Father of spirits, and live? They disciplined us as seemed right to them, to prepare us for the short span of mortal life; but God does so for our true profit, that we may share his holiness. At the time it is administered, all discipline seems a cause for grief and not for joy, but later it brings forth the fruit of peace and justice to those who are trained in its school.

Gospel: (Mt 10:37-39) Fr. Burke

Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me,
Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me.
Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps
is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it;
anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.

UNDELIVERED SERMON #1 - 16 MARCH 75
Thanksgiving For Family Re-union

Let's imagine that we are at a home-coming celebration, and that the Lord has seen fit to send each and everyone of us a special message by way of a very special herald - a personal message, just for you - just for me - in this time and in this place, and specifically related to this occasion. For, this is precisely what Sacred Scripture is! And let us try, then, in this perspective to meditate on today's readings, and try to reflect upon what God may be saying to each one of us - NOT merely in the context of the words, but in the context of this gathering, its purpose, and our own parts in it.

What does the first reading say to you? It was taken from Psalm 127, and it tells us clearly that "children are a gift from the Lord." At the very least, this seems to suggest that children are a great blessing. Sometimes, many of us might not think so. ~~At first they demand all of our attention, but too soon we hardly see them at all.~~ But regardless of the worry, and is there any parent here who has not worried? - who is not worried? Regardless of this worry, we soon come to realize that indeed children are a great blessing, for they give us an ever so small insight into Our Heavenly Father's enduring concern for each and every one of us.

The second reading was from Tobit, and it was a little more specific. Whereas the first reading suggested thanksgiving, the second reading identifies the subject of our thanksgiving. By changing only the proper names used, we were able to share in rejoicing at the return of some of our very own children, actually framing our greeting in the precise words of the inspired Old Testament writer. Surely, no better words could be found to specify the cause of our celebration. The words of Sacred Scripture truly became our words!

The third reading was taken from Paul's letter to the Hebrews, and, at first, it might seem to have introduced a sombre note unbecoming the occasion. But the inspired writer himself refers to them as "encouraging words," and actually, do they not provide a contrast which in the end can only heighten our joy? Do they not help us to understand that the real joy of home-coming is possible only through and after the pain of separation? And here you gain yet another small insight into Our Heavenly Father, who the inspired writer says, "deals with you as children." And who among us does not realize how we even discipline our own children through love? Consider this also: if joining Our Father in Heaven is our ultimate destiny, might we not therefore expect some purification through pain here on earth? The sacred writer assures us that even Christ "for the sake of the joy which lay before him endured the cross." Are we not therefore encouraged to understand and accept our little earth-bound set-backs in that light? As the Apostle says elsewhere, "How deep are the riches...of God! How unsearchable his ways!"

Our children, it often seems to me, understand this law of contrasts - that you can't have mountains without valleys - even better than we parents do. They already seem to have learned that many of the pleasures which we sought so earnestly rarely bring lasting satisfaction. And they seem infinitely more willing to make genuine sacrifices, as witness their generations' achievements through the Peace Corps, Vista, the Gallo boycott, disenchantment with an unjust war, acceptance of simplicity of dress (for which many of us still yell - "Crucify them!"), and their general commitment to social services and volun-

teer programs! If we persist in trying to obscure the cross for them, as we seem to insist upon doing for ourselves, then we are seriously misreading the "signs of the times" indeed.

Finally, the Gospel according to Matthew brings this emerging overall perspective into even sharper focus. Again, we are given to understand that our earthly experience, with its joys born out of sadness (and just look around you for examples), is but the mildest hint of the Model of Love which we - as husbands, wives, family, the Church - reflect; reflect of the Fathers relation to the Son! As the Apostle says, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him." That is to say, there is no comparison between the joy we are blessed with together here today - and what is to come!

This, really, gets it all together! Does it not suggest that, as we encounter every little joy of this life, we must never lose sight of the ultimate Source of all joy - all love: Our Heavenly Father! - As we welcome our son Charlie and his family - Charlie: the navigator - let us resolve to stay on course and keep the beacon which is this "Light from Light" forever in our sight! For, is it not only in this perspective that we might now sincerely exclaim our thanksgiving together, thus:

Almighty Father, through Your Son, Jesus, we thank You for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which we have all shared in so intimately here this afternoon. We thank You for the blessing of our faith as just celebrated in union with You and one another in the Holy sacrifice of the mass. We thank You for the great blessing of our family, and for this opportunity to enjoy together this revitalizing commemoration of the love of the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ - which sustains our love for one another, and we pray for ever increasing grace to love and to serve You better every remaining moment of our lives,

Amen!