



# Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

## Fatherhood is forever



“For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom all paternity in Heaven and earth is named.” (Eph. 3.14-15)

## **Once enacted, it participates in the eternal. Undiminished. Ageless. Ceaseless.**

It is a seal. It is an identity from which we can never be extricated: it cannot be taken from a father. Strip him of all things; take his clothes, his shoes, his money; deprive him of his good name and all esteem, take from him his honor, his strength, his health; leave him naked and covered in ashes and contumely — take *all* these things from him; deprive him of hope in every dream. Take this all ... and more ... but you will not, for you cannot, take from him his fatherhood.

It is a seal upon his soul; it is his ontological presence in the universe, from which vast parts of the universe unfold, generation unto generation.

In his children he is one.

In his children he is become many.

### **Like unto God**

A father's dignity is great, but it is made great only *by* and *through* his children. In his children he is ennobled, however base he may become, and in this sense, they are his redemption. Yes, he has given them life. But they have conferred *dignity* upon life, for they have made him like unto God Who is Father of us all.

Fatherhood, in its creative impetus, both emulates the Fatherhood of God, and derives from it ... and in God alone it participates and endures.

It is not just perpetuity that binds father to child, but eternity. He is *forever* a father, once having fathered.

Alas for sorrow, in this life, with Rachel he may weep in Ramah, that his beloved children are no more ... yes, in *this* life they may be no more, nor may he swathe them in his anguish, lave them in his tears — but his fatherhood endures ... for his children endure — forever.

## **Joy and Sorrow**

The very fabric of the universe stirs under the breath of life, even as it respire beyond a father's grasp, is lifted from his bronzed arms, and borne upon the promise of prophets. A father brings to being what he must ever relinquish, and his breath pales on the fringe of glory.

Here, in that penumbra between what was not, what is, what must be, and what will ever be; in that pale nimbus borne trembling upon a father's hands ...

fatherhood even enters the sacral, for it enters *into*, even as it issues forth *from*, the Motherhood of Mary, who is the *Mother of Life* — who alone, in all creation, bore within herself the Way, the Truth, and the *Life*.

The Mother of Sorrows ... how well we understand each other. You buried your Son. I buried my child, too.

The world had sifted her through my fingers, and I have wept the tears of death. I have seen the dwelling of Holy Innocents far above the still and empty cradle.

In my grief, have I not cried up to God, my Father:

*“Yet she lives! ... In Thee! ... Unto Thee! And surely Thou keepest her for me. I will yet behold the face of my daughter!”*

... I have dwelt in Ramah.

But she who was no more, by her very being, swift as a baby’s breath in the incensed wind, gave unto me this gift, this pledge to all that is eternal: I am her father.

I have been anointed with fatherhood. It cannot be reaved of me. Nor can she!

I am, as in no other aspect of my being, my fatherhood. The Most High God gave this to me – through her – as an imperishable gift, an everlasting inheritance! So great is His pledge that it is indefeasible to, inexpungable within, my very being itself.

***My children are mine. And I am theirs.***

It will *always, always* be.

That is why, in the culmination of his years, heedless of all else, the father ran to his prodigal son. This was his treasure — not what the son had *taken*, but ***what he had brought back!***

In utter poverty, covered with shame, blemished in sin, discarded by the world, unadorned, unshod ... the son bore to his father the treasure of all time, the treasure *for* all time: flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood ... the child in whose absence a father ever longs.

## **The Father of Every Child ...**

A father is father to every child in the world. Every baby, every child, is his ... too.

Because it is given by God, and is a participation in the Fatherhood of God

Himself, fatherhood is a pouring forth upon all children, extends to all children,

and because of God's predilection for the abandoned, *especially* for orphans ... for

we ourselves are, one and all, adopted sons and daughters of God.

Only Christ is consubstantial with the Father.

We are — each of us — orphans withal, adopted by the Father through the Son. It

is not by nature, but by predilection and grace, that we are God's children. If we

are children of the One Father, are we not, then, children of *every* father who

participates in, has received his fatherhood from, the Fatherhood of God Himself?

## **The Fatherhood of Grace**

This is the fatherhood of grace. It is such a breathlessly beautiful fatherhood, for

father binds himself to child, and child to father, through love, each of one nature,

one love, while not of one flesh, grace yielding each to each other; the one

covering innocence with fatherhood, the other investing manhood with fatherhood,

and fatherhood with dignity — and both bound up in one love born of grace for it is born of God.

My children, even now, cling to my sunburned neck, those of nature and those of grace, and I know them not apart. Each has possession of my heart. My life is as readily forfeit for the one as the other. Their laughter is a perpetual song, an eternal harmony, in my heart.

A father's heart, I think, is like unto the heart of God.

***There is no fatherless child.***

There are only children whom I have not yet found.

*A Father*



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