

SUNDAY MESSENGER



See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1)

We are God's Children

A friend of mine was sitting at the lobby of a hotel in Jerusalem and his attention was caught by two boys joyfully playing with each other. Their play was put on hold, when a man entered in. He looked around, saw the boys and walked towards them. A young lady stood up to welcome him and they embraced each other, while the boys were dancing around their parents, trying to enter in between. One succeeded, but his younger brother could not. In his desperate attempt to get the attention of his father, he cried, 'abba!' The cry made the father to stoop down and pick him up, bringing the little boy to the fellowship of the entire family.

Father Who Loves

"See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). Abba, daddy, and papa, we are so familiar with these variants of children's way of addressing their father. It evokes the meaning of familiarity, intimacy, dependency, and trust. But that familiarity, intimacy, dependency, and trust is seldom achieved in our relationship with God. We fear Him, we revere Him and we worship Him, but, do we love Him? The first commandment is "Hear, O Israel: the Lord

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

(John 10:11-17)

God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) Why, then, is our relationship with God often marked by formalism?

Jesus' powerful ministry sprang from His relationship with the Father. We can still sense this intimacy between the two when we read in the Gospels that "the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he himself does (John 5:20)," and that "He who sent me is with me and has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him (John 8:29)." Jesus also wanted us, his followers, to build such intimate relationship with His Father and perceive God's presence in all events of our lives. He taught us to pray "Our Father," He told us the parable of the "Forgiving Father" (Luke 15:11-32), and He insisted that the goodness of our Heavenly Father surpasses that of our earthly parents (Luke 11:9-13). Should this not suffice to make us approach our God in a more childlike way?

A man who worried himself to death heard: "Why do you worry? Am I not your Father?"

Love that laid down Life

"This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again" (John 10:17). We are God's children only because Jesus laid down His life for us. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

The Gospel is called Good News not without reason. It is the revelation of God's love. Without Christ, we would never know that God is love and what the meaning of this love is. No wonder that Peter exclaims: "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The world has seen many holy books unveiling the mystery of God,

none of them, however, can be compared to the Gospel. The world has seen many prophets, preachers, and enlightened people teaching about the mystery of life, yet, none of them lay down their lives for their sheep. Love is not a noun, but a verb. It cannot be described, it needs to be lived out. That is the reason why Jesus alone will remain "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) and the only way to the Father (John 14:6). "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Jesus did not talk about love. He embodied it.

Conclusion

St. Therese of the Child of Jesus left us this parable.

Think of a little child that is learning to stand but does not yet know how to walk. In his desire to reach the top of the stairs to find his mother, he lifts his little foot to climb the first stair. It is all in vain, and at each renewed effort he falls. From the top of the stairs, the good God looks at you with love. Soon, won over by your useless efforts, He will come down Himself and, taking you in His arms, He will carry you up.

In Jesus, God came down to us, took up in His arms and has carried us up to that unimaginable dignity of being called His children. So, we cry 'Abba! Father!' to get His attention, to feel His embrace, and to experience His love.

May God bless all of us

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