

***PARENTS,
PEACE!***

Andrew Jerome Yeung

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PEACE!***

Sixth edition

By
Andrew Jerome Yeung

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FIRST SECTION - GENERAL AFFAIRS

From the Vatican, November 20, 2000

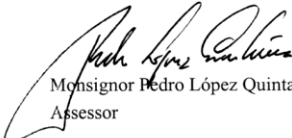
Dear Mr. Yeung,

The Holy Father wishes me to express his gratitude for the copy of your book "Parents, Peace!", which you sent to him. He very much appreciates the devoted sentiments which prompted your gesture.

His Holiness asks our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain you in his grace and to fill you with his peace.

I am also pleased to convey to you the Apostolic Blessing.

Sincerely yours,



Monsignor Pedro López Quintana
Assessor

Foreword

By Rev. Fr. Thomas R. Harding, B.A., M.A., Ph.D.,
Priest in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

I first met Andrew Jerome Yeung some years ago when he visited Prince of Peace Church where my brother, Fr. William F. Harding, was pastor. On that occasion Andrew gave every parishioner a copy of his first book. As the years went by I got better acquainted with him, especially through the game of golf.

It was only last Saturday that I met his whole family at St. Bonaventure's Church in Toronto on the day of the Mass of the Resurrection for his dear mother, Dr. Cissy Yeung, who had entered eternal life soon after her ninetieth birthday. Her husband, Dr. George Yeung, had pre-deceased her by a decade and a half. I was greatly impressed by the Yeung family. The elder couple had been very devout Catholics. Andrew and his brothers and sisters, the children and the grandchildren, had many things in common. First of all, they live their faith in a beautiful way. Secondly, they are doctors, teachers and professional people who serve their respective communities in an unselfish and dedicated manner.

I was not surprised then that Andrew wrote *PARENTS, PEACE!* in order to share his experience with his fellow parents. I was honoured when he asked me to write the Foreword to this wonderful book. I have found it to be faithful to the teaching of the

Catholic Church, to Sacred Scripture, Tradition, Catholic Theology, and the writings of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. This is an excellent work on the raising of children through faith, hope and love, on Christian family life and marriage, and the importance of prayer.

I recommend it whole-heartedly.

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CHAPTER ONE

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE

Parents who fear desperately for their children's spiritual well-being in this age of immorality are very difficult to reach and console. What can one say to those who daily worry over the sinfulness of their sons and daughters, and who lose all sense of peace when they see the evils that plague the world today? Who is convincing enough to alleviate the dejection of a father or mother suffering from utter despair? To whose authoritative voice will they listen?

The Vicar of Christ may be able to provide some assistance in this matter! In the book *CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE* by His Holiness John Paul II (Messori, V., ed., Alfred A. Knopf Canada, Toronto, 1994), one can uncover gems of insight and wisdom that may bring solace and direction to parents who are completely devoid of hope for their loved ones.

The rest of Chapter One, except for the opening section and the Closing Prayer, contains excerpts taken from the book written by this great 21st century saint. The number in brackets after each selection is the page on which the citation is found. Quotation marks are purposely omitted so as not to distract the reader or to impede the flow of thought. The texts chosen are self-explanatory, and no commentaries are necessary. I

would not want, in any case, through personal interpretation, to dilute or alter the meaning of the saintly Pontiff's teachings. It is only by way of introduction that I make three brief remarks below.

First, the Holy Father bases some of his theological theses on part of St. Paul's speech about God, a speech he gave at the Areopagus in Athens, Greece. The discourse is reported in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and mentioned in the Pope's book but does not appear there. For the sake of convenience to the reader, it is presented in the next paragraph.

“From one single principle he not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed the times and limits of their habitation. *And he did this so that they might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him; and indeed he is not far from any of us, since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist,* as indeed some of your own writers have said: We are his children.” (Acts 17:26–28, NJB)

Second, His Holiness emphasizes the importance of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The parable is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 15, verses 11 to 32. The reader should spend some quality time meditating on it.

Lastly, it should be noted that, while the Holy Father speaks in glowing terms concerning Jesus' marvelous achievement in redeeming humankind from sin, he is not saying it is alright to sin or that we do nothing to stop the spread of sin and evil. Far from it! To dispel any misunderstanding on this point, let us

now begin quoting from his book with the following passage:

The Pope, like every Christian, must be keenly aware of the dangers to which man is subject in the world, in his temporal future, and in his final, eternal, eschatological future. The awareness of these dangers does not generate pessimism, but rather encourages the struggle for the victory of good in every realm. And it is precisely from this struggle for the victory of good in man and in the world that the need for prayer arises. (23)

Sin, Salvation, Redemption

The world that the Son of man found when He became man deserved condemnation, because of the sin that had dominated all of history, beginning with the fall of our first parents...

Nevertheless, convincing the world of the existence of sin is not the same as condemning it for sinning. "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." Convincing the world of sin means creating the conditions for its salvation... To save means to embrace and lift up with redemptive love, with love that is always greater than any sin. In this regard the parable of the prodigal son is an unsurpassable paradigm. (57)

The work of redemption is to elevate the work of creation to a new level. Creation is permeated with a redemptive sanctification, even a divinization. It comes as if drawn to the sphere of the divinity and of the

intimate life of God. In this realm the destructive power of sin is defeated. (22)

The history of salvation is very simple... In a certain sense it is entirely contained in the parable of the prodigal son, or in the words of Christ when He addresses the adulteress: “Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore” (Jn 8:11, NAB). (58)

The Young

My most memorable experience of that period, when my pastoral activities concentrated above all on the young, was the discovery of the fundamental importance of youth. What is youth: It is not only a period of life that corresponds to a certain number of years, it is also a time given by Providence to every person and given to him as a responsibility. During that time he searches, like the young man in the Gospel, for answers to basic questions; he searches not only for the meaning of life but also for a concrete way to go about living his life. This is the most fundamental characteristic of youth. Every mentor, beginning with parents, let alone every pastor, must be aware of this characteristic and must know how to identify it in every boy and girl. I will say more: He must love this fundamental aspect of youth. (120)

If at every stage of his life man desires to be his own person, to find love, during his youth he desires it even more strongly. The desire to be one's own person, however, must not be understood as a license to do anything, without exception. The young do not want

that at all – they are willing to be corrected, they want to be told yes or no. They need guides, and they want them close at hand. If they turn to authority figures, they do so because they see in them a wealth of human warmth and a willingness to walk with them along the paths they are following. (121)

After all, young people are always searching for the beauty in love. They want their love to be beautiful. If they give in to weakness, following models of behaviour that can rightly be considered a “scandal in the contemporary world” (and these are, unfortunately widely diffused models), in the depths of their hearts they still desire a beautiful and pure love. This is as true of boys as it is of girls. Ultimately, they know that only God can give them this love. As a result, they are willing to follow Christ, without caring about the sacrifices this may entail. (123)

I would like to sum up by stressing that the young are searching for God, they are searching for the meaning of life, they are searching for definitive answers: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk 10:25, NAB). In this search, they cannot help but encounter the Church. (125)

Fear Not

In Redemption we find the most profound basis for the words “Be not afraid!”: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (cf. Jn 3:16). This Son is always present in the history of humanity as Redeemer. The Redemption pervades all of human history, even before Christ, and prepares its

eschatological future. It is the light that “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:5, NAB). The power of Christ’s Cross and Resurrection is greater than any evil which man could or should fear. (219)

Peoples and nations of the entire world need to hear these words. Their conscience needs to grow in the certainty that Someone exists who holds in His hands the destiny of this passing world... And this Someone is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8,16) – Love that became man, Love crucified and risen, Love unceasingly present among men. (222)

God is not someone who remains only outside of the world, content to be in Himself all-knowing and omnipotent. His wisdom and omnipotence are placed, by free choice, at the service of creation. (62)

And so: “Have no fear!” Do not be afraid of God’s mystery; do not be afraid of His love; and do not be afraid of man’s weakness or of his grandeur! Man does not cease to be great, not even in his weakness. (12)

In the end, before Christ Crucified, the man who shares in redemption will have the advantage over the man who sets himself up as an unbending judge of God’s actions in his own life as well as in that of all humanity. (67)

Be Joyful in the Gospel

The Gospel, above all else, is the joy of creation. God, who in creating saw that His creation was good (cf. Gn 1:1–25), is the source of joy for all creatures, and above all for humankind. God the Creator seems to

say of all creation: “It is good that you exist.” And His joy spreads especially through the ‘good news,’ according to which good is greater than all that is evil in the world. Evil, in fact, is neither fundamental nor definitive. This point clearly distinguishes Christianity from all forms of existential pessimism. (20)

This essential joy of creation is, in turn, completed by the joy of salvation, by the joy of redemption. The Gospel, above all, is a great joy for the salvation of man. The Creator of man is also his Redeemer. Salvation not only confronts evil in each of its existing forms in this world but proclaims victory over evil. “I have conquered the world,” says Christ (Jn 16:33, NAB). (21)

To accept the Gospel’s demands means to affirm all of our humanity, to see in it the beauty desired by God, while at the same time recognizing, in light of the power of God Himself, our weaknesses: “What is impossible for human beings is possible for God” (Lk 18:27, NAB). (223)

Prayer

We must look at the immensity of good that has sprung from the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and, at the same time, not lose sight of the mystery of sin, which is continually expanding. Saint Paul writes that “where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more” (Rom 5:20, NAB).

This profound truth presents a perennial challenge for prayer. It shows how necessary prayer is for the world and for the Church, because in the end it

constitutes the easiest way of making God and His redeeming love present in the world. (23)

Through prayer God reveals Himself above all as Mercy – that is, Love that goes out to those who are suffering, Love that sustains, uplifts, and invites us to trust. The victory of good in the world is united organically with this truth. A person who prays professes such a truth and in a certain sense makes God, who is merciful Love, present in the world. (26)

Hope in God

Generations come and go which have distanced themselves from Christ and the Church, which have accepted a secular model of thinking and living or upon which such a model has been imposed...

Despite all of the losses the Church has suffered, it does not cease to look toward the future with hope. Such hope is a sign of the power of the Spirit. (113)

It is very important to cross the threshold of hope, not to stop before it, but to let oneself be led. (223)

Closing Prayer

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Rom 15:13, RSV)

CHAPTER TWO

DEAR PARENTS

I am writing to you, fathers and mothers, who feel disappointed and ashamed; you have taught your children as well as you know how but they are not what you want them to be. I am writing to bring to your attention Scriptural passages that offer guidance. I am writing to remind you to have great faith in God. He is the one who gave life to your children. He cares immeasurably for them.

God the Father

Jesus said, “Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven.” (Mt 23:9, NAB) This saying is addressed to parents. You are to remember that ultimately God is the father of your children. In the Song of Moses, these remarks are made about Him:

“Is he not your father who begot you,
the one who made and established you?” (Deut
32:6, NAB)

“You forgot the God who gave you birth.” (Deut
32:18, NAB)

And the psalmist praises God with this saying:
“You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother’s womb.” (Ps 139:13,
NAB)

Just as these words are for you, they are also for your ancestors, and for your offspring as well.

God is father of his people. And as father he cherishes them all. You hold your children dear, but so does God, much more than you can imagine! And much more genuinely; for your 'love' and 'concern' may be tinted with self-centred anxieties. God's affection is pure and true.

The Love of God

You can gain some insight into the wondrous compassion of God in the story of the Prodigal Son. (Lk 15:11–24) You can also witness his mercy in the account of the woman taken in adultery. (Jn 8:3–11) I invite you to read these two passages again and to ponder them with fresh eyes, keeping in mind Jesus' command: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and there will be gifts for you." (Lk 6:37–38, NJB)

In your meditation, please keep in mind also that God's sense of justice is unlike ours. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is 55:8–9, RSV) "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?'

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” (Rom 11:33–36, NIV)

The Guilty Ones

If you have tried, as much as you are capable, to teach holiness and self-control to your children, you are not accountable for their going astray. God does not convict anyone for teaching virtue and giving good example. The people who will be convicted are those who lead others to sin. Jesus said, “Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur. It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.” (Lk 17:1-2, NAB)

Pray with Strong Faith

When asked “What must we do if we are to carry out God’s work?” Jesus replied, “This is carrying out God’s work: you must believe in the one he has sent.” (Jn 6:28–29, NJB) A sure way you can perform the work of God through belief in his Son is to pray with expectant faith. St. James said in his epistle, “Faith without deeds is dead.” (See Jas 2:21–26, NIV.) This is partly what he meant: if our so-called faith is not accompanied by deeds that evidence trust in God, it is useless. Prayers said without confidence are merely empty words.

If you want your prayer to be answered, please pray as Jesus taught: “Therefore I tell you, all that you ask

for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours.” (Mk 11:24, NAB)

The prayer of faith is a singularly powerful weapon. With it you can reverse the tide of immorality and irreligion that has swept over the world.

Pray for all parents. Pray for your own peace of mind. Pray for your sons and daughters, and all God’s children. Pray especially that God will pardon their sins. Like Jesus, beg him from your heart, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34, NAB)

Pray the “Our Father.” The longest petition in this superb prayer is for forgiveness. In it Jesus also taught us to ask for deliverance from temptation and evil.

Chastisement

Pray that, in order to secure their repentance, God will not have to reprimand your children. But do not be alarmed should this come to pass. It is only for their good that God corrects his people. “Because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.” (Prov 3:12, NIV) For the Prodigal Son, chastisement came in the form of total financial bankruptcy, abject hunger, and hard labour. For the woman taken in adultery, it was public humiliation and the disgraceful penalty of stoning.

Pray that if admonition does come, it will accomplish its purpose with perfect effectiveness and yield the appropriate response from your children in the shortest time.

Hope

Never tire of praying for your children. Do not give up. If the Prodigal Son can return to his father, if the woman taken in adultery can meet Jesus and be rescued, so also can your sons and daughters.

Your children may be under the temporary influence of evil-doers, but be assured that victory will come because of the infinite love of God. “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:37–39, NIV)

Always look forward to the day when, like the Prodigal Son’s father, you will be able to say with gratitude to God, “Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.” (Lk 15:23–24, NAB)

Give Thanks

Let us thank God daily for his love. If he had not sent Jesus to die for our children’s sins, we certainly would despair. But as it is we can place our hope in the redemptive merits of Our Saviour.

Scripture says, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 Jn 4:10, NIV)

“While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man – though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we yet were sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” (Rom 5:6–10, RSV)

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Rom 8:31–34, NIV)

Jesus

“Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers

halted, and he said, ‘Young man, I tell you, arise!’ The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.” (Lk 7:11–15, NAB)

One of the most agonizing ordeal human beings can experience is to miss the person they love. For parents, to miss a child, their own flesh and blood with whom they spent so many beautiful and memorable years, is to go through an emptiness indescribably difficult to bear. For them it may feel as if everything is collapsing and being shattered to pieces.

Jesus understood this. He brought back to the widow her one and only son.

Jesus is understanding. He is kind. He empathizes with his people. Pray humbly to him: “Jesus, I ask you to please have mercy and return my child to holiness and peace. In the interest of all parents, I ask this favour for their sons and daughters as well.”

Mother Mary

Turn also to Our Lady. As Jesus on the cross entrusted everyone to her with these words, “Woman, this is your son,” (Jn 19:26, NJB) so too can you enlist her aid by saying, “Mother, this is your son. Mother, this is your daughter. Please do whatever you can for them.”

You are stricken with grief, so was Our Lady. Your heart is broken, so was hers. Listen to Simeon’s prophecy at the Temple: “And a sword will pierce your soul too.” (Lk 2:35, NJB) And Mary certainly knew what it was like to lose a child to the evils of man. She will spare no effort to intercede on your behalf.

In your journey with Our Lady may you and your children mature in all spirituality as Jesus did under her tutelage. “And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Lk 2:51–52, RSV)

Fear Not

And do not be afraid. God did not create his children for disaster, but for good. He did not create them for Hell, but for Heaven. He did not create them as presents for the devil, but as heirs to His own glorious Kingdom.

God’s defeat of the devil is absolute. Do not be frightened. “Resist the devil, and he will run away from you.” (Jas 4:7, NJB)

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” (Phil 4:4–8, NIV)

A Prayer from Scripture

“This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name. In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with all God’s holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; so that, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God.

“Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.” (Eph 3:14–21, NJB)

CHAPTER THREE

HOPE

The virtue of hope is an expectation and a desire that what God has promised will indeed come true.

Take this example. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand.” (Jn 10:27–29, NAB) Parents who act on the God-given theological virtue of hope will take this promise of Jesus to heart, apply it to their own children, and derive from it genuine peace and consolation.

They will also increase in understanding of God and his creation as they read the following passage. “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’

“So he told them this parable: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one

sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Lk 15:3–7, RSV)

Presumption

This is not to say that mothers and fathers may advise their children: “Go ahead and sin. It’s alright.” Those who offer such misguided instructions are guilty of the serious sins of presumption and irreverence towards God and his laws.

Hope is not based on any infraction of God’s decrees. Jesus said, “You must love the Lord your God...” (Mt 22:37, NJB) “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” (Jn 14:15, NJB) You *must* love God – by obeying his commands. Whether the children are willing to do so at this stage of their development is another matter; God has given them the gift of free will. But no one may counsel them to sin.

You are Not at Fault

It is sad, but some children are more resistant than others to sensible training. Now, if parents have done their duty, it is appropriate that they do not blame themselves for the children’s spiritual blindness.

Stand firm on Jesus’ statement in the next story, and do not doubt him. “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” (Jn 9:1–3, NIV)

The prophet Ezekiel put it very clearly: “The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child.” (Ezek 18:20, NIV)

God Will Teach Them

Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God.” (Jn 6:44–45, NJB)

Let the Lord teach them!

Now, we are not advocating that you abrogate your important role as earthly guardians; we are not telling you to stop training and disciplining your sons and daughters. We are simply reminding you to remember God’s part in their upbringing, and leave some things in his hands. Once in a while you may have to let go a little bit. This is not an easy task; you will feel regret and failure; you will miss your children; the sense of loss will be sharp. But you must trust in the ability of the Lord to educate his people.

When Will God Act?

In the second quotation near the beginning of this chapter, the tax-collectors and sinners who came to listen to Jesus were grown men and women. It is not unlikely that your children will also be adults by the time they finally hear and respond to God’s call. Your hope must include the acceptance that change may not necessarily happen right now but perhaps at a much later date.

The following are references in the Gospel that depict the turning points in the lives of five individuals. By reflecting on these texts it may improve your knowledge of God and how he reaches out to his lost sheep.

The first recalls how Jesus drew Zacchaeus back to the fold. All he said to the sinful tax-collector was, “Zacchae’us, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” Immediately the man came and made this commitment to redress the wrongs he had done. He promised, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.” The dramatic event brought forth Jesus’ description of a very important part of his mission, “For the Son of man came to seek out and to save the lost.” (Lk 19:5, 8, 10, RSV)

The second story is about the woman caught in adultery and sentenced to death by stoning. The narrative demonstrates Jesus’ readiness to both defend and to correct his people. This was the occasion on which he said, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” One after another the accusers left, and Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.” (Jn 8:7, 10, 11, RSV)

The third is found in Lk 7:36–38 (NIV). “When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life

learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them." Read the rest of the passage and you will witness how tenderly Jesus welcomed the return of the penitent. "Your sins are forgiven," he said. "Go in peace." (Lk 7:48, 50, NIV)

Then there was the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman who had had five husbands and who was then living with a man to whom she was not married. By her transformation she became instrumental in bringing a large number of her neighbours to Jesus. "Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony, 'He told me everything I have done.'" (Jn 4:39, NJB)

Finally we hear the beautiful account of the repentance of the good thief crucified beside Jesus. He admitted his sinfulness at the last hour. "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He answered him, 'In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'" (Lk 23:39-43, NJB)

Will Jesus come to your children? Definitely! When? We do not know; but he surely will. And they will be given the opportunity to learn what he wants them to learn, change what he wants them to change, do what he wants them to do.

"Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me; I will certainly not reject anyone who comes to

me, because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me.” (Jn 6:37–39, NJB)

The Good Shepherd

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired man, when he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep and runs away, because he is not the shepherd and the sheep are not his. Then the wolf harries the flock and scatters the sheep. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice.” (Jn 10:14–16, NIV)

Jesus also said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” (Jn 12:32, RSV) Jesus has already been lifted up on Calvary. He was raised gloriously at the Resurrection. At his Ascension, he was taken high up into heaven. And so, as he promised, he will draw all to himself, including your sons and daughters.

Perhaps you can hold Jesus up to your children and make him even more visible by your steadfast faith in

him, by your unwavering hope, your inexhaustible love, and your joyful countenance.

Pray

Let your hope be accompanied by persistent prayer. Listen to what Jesus has to say. “Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. ‘There was a judge in a certain town,’ he said, ‘who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone. In the same town there was also a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, “I want justice from you against my enemy!” For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, “Even though I have neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face.”’”

“And the Lord said, ‘You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily.’” (Lk 18:1–8, NJB)

Jesus promised, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Mt 7:7–8, NAB)

Holy Mass

The most excellent and theologically correct prayer you can offer to God for your children is the Mass. In this celebration, the whole Church prays for them. It is true that in the Church there are some unholy members; but there are also many holy ones. And God will listen to their voices.

Beyond that, the most important reality to keep in mind is Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary, for that is what is being re-enacted at the altar. This is precisely why the prayer is so efficacious.

From the beginning of the Mass, in the penitential rite, we hear these wonderful petitions to Jesus.

“You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord have mercy.”

“You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.”

“You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.”

“May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.”

In the Gloria, together we implore Jesus to hear our prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.”

Then, addressing God in one of the Prefaces, the priest articulates: “Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks. For in goodness you created man and, when he

was justly condemned, in mercy you redeemed him, through Christ our Lord.”

And in the first Eucharistic prayer, the celebrant pleads on our behalf, “Therefore, Lord, we pray: graciously accept this oblation of our service, that of your whole family; order our days in your peace, and command that we be delivered from eternal damnation and counted among the flock of those you have chosen. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

At the Consecration, Jesus reminds us of his sacred pledges, “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you...

“Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Before the great Amen, the priest prays, “To us, also, your servants, who, though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies, graciously grant some share and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs... and all your Saints; admit us, we beseech you, into their company, not weighing our merits, but granting us your pardon, through Christ our Lord.”

In the “Our Father” you already know the appeals for pardon and protection from the evil one. The prayer after this contains additional requests. “Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.”

The Mass ends with this consoling farewell. “The Lord be with you... May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit... Go in peace.”

Hope in Your Saviour

Go to Mass often, and allow the prayers of the Church to help your children. Let the Mass readings direct you.

At Holy Communion, remember your children as you pray, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Read the story after which this invocation is patterned (Lk 7:1–10); you will see that the petition is not for the Roman centurion himself, but for his beloved servant. Let this therefore be a prayer for your beloved children too. Let it be a prayer of hope, a prayer of expectation and desire that Jesus will surely keep his promise: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand.” (Jn 10:28, NAB)

“Lord, only say the word and my children shall be healed.” At the appointed time Jesus will speak his word. Your sons and daughters will be healed. They will return to their senses. They will come back to the Father. They will be safe and sound in Heaven – with you, in tearful surprise and grateful joy.

Pray, believe, and hope in the all loving and merciful God of miracles.

CHAPTER FOUR

FAITH

Past Failings

We may not have been the best of parents; we may not have done all that was required to bring up our children properly. Through our omissions, mistakes, weaknesses, ignorance and sins, we were unable to guide them in the most perfect way. Those days have gone by, and we cannot change them anymore. There is little else we can do now except to turn to God in faith. Dear parents, this is a vitally important step to take!

For faith can set us in right relationship with God. Listen to St. Paul. “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God. What does Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness... ... The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness.” (Rom 4:1–5, 23–24, NIV)

God's Love and Grace

Put your faith in God by believing this about him: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities... For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.” (Ps 103:8–10, 14, RSV)

When we believe in an understanding God, no matter how weak we have been, we can apply this saying of St. Paul to ourselves: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’... For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor 12:9, 10, NAB)

Bless the Lord

“I will bless the Lord at all times.” (Ps 34:1, RSV)
To bless God is to speak well of him, to think good thoughts about him, to interpret his words and deeds in the best light, to believe in his promises, to trust in his willingness and power to save.

A parent who has faith in God says humbly, “Lord, I admit my negligence and past failures. I have fallen short in my duties towards the children. I beg your forgiveness. I know that you love me and my family. I know that you love us very dearly. I know that you are with us and take care of us at all times. I believe firmly that with you by our side everything will turn out well. You look upon us in kindness; you receive our prayers with compassion; for every little good that we attempt

to perform you smile on us with a fatherly countenance of appreciation and support.” That is blessing God.

This parent might also say, “Lord, I am troubled and do not know what to do. I need your help. Whatever in me that requires correction please let me know your will so that, with your assistance, I may make the necessary changes in the way I live. Lord, you are the God of peace, and I ask you in Jesus’ name to drive out the devil and all evil spirits that are fomenting darkness and depression.”

On the other hand, those who have no firm belief in God speak like this to him, “Why me? Why did you give me such children? With them around there is never any peace. There can never be lasting joy. I always have this ominous foreboding that at any moment I will receive disastrous news about one of them. This dread won’t ever go away. Sometimes I wish I were dead.”

Condemned

It is written about Jesus: “He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” (Jn 3:18, RSV) People who do not act on their gift of faith condemn themselves to melancholy, worry, anger and hatred.

When we disbelieve the Bible’s description of God, we judge him according to our own limited experience, we raise ourselves to a point where we think we know God better than the inspired writers of Holy Scripture. At the same time, we denigrate God in our sight by

lowering him to our own level. In so doing we chain ourselves to superficiality and confusion that give rise to despair and sickness in mind, body, and soul.

Fear of the Lord

In the Gospel according to Luke, it is recorded that Mary said in the *Magnificat*: “And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.” (Lk 1:50, RSV) Those who fear God have, among other things, a wholesome reverence for him, and a very strong faith in him. They acknowledge and respect his omniscience, power, and majesty. They are confident that he will triumph over all evil. They are inspired by an intense hope and a personal devotion to the will of God.

Psalm 128 tells us that such people will enjoy God’s special favour. “Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” (Ps 128:1–4, RSV)

Notice that fear of God includes walking in his ways. Whether you are man or woman, your personal adherence to God’s laws will benefit your spouse and the whole family both now and far into the future.

“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep

his covenant and remember to do his commandments.”
(Ps 103:17–18, RSV)

Childlikeness

Strive to relate to God with simplicity. Be as the psalmist says, “I hold myself in quiet and silence, like a little child in its mother’s arms, like a little child, so I keep myself.” (Ps 131:2, NJB)

For the Lord commands, “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Ps 46:10, RSV)

And Jesus himself tells us, “In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.” (Mt 18:3, NJB)

Prayer

Simplicity and childlikeness should be seen in the way you pray. Jesus said, “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done.’” (Mt 6:7–10, NIV)

Peace

Jesus said, “Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” (Jn 14:27, NJB) Jesus’ own peace is a peace that kept him steady throughout his Passion and

Crucifixion. It is a peace unshaken in the face of heart-wrenching pain and sorrow; it remains even on the road to seeming defeat; it holds everything together as life appears to be falling apart. This is the peace he gives you as you grapple with the events that affect your children and family.

This peace will help you to stop worrying about how difficult or how nigh impossible it would be for your dreams to come true. It will help you to refrain from wishing inordinately for things to happen according to your own time-table and in the way you suggest. It will help you to discover that joy in your heart does not depend on your children's instantaneous conversion.

Be open to peace. Seek it. Yearn for it. Accept it.

Total Surrender

Jesus said, "And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Mt 28:20, NJB) Jesus is telling you emphatically to believe that he is near to you, that he takes great interest in your affairs, that he is unceasingly there for you.

Make the leap of faith, and abandon yourself to him. With John the Baptist, tell him, "Jesus, you must increase; I must decrease." (See Jn 3:30.)

With the psalmist, pray with these words:

"I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

“The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.” (Ps 34:1, 4, 6, 18, 19, 22, RSV)

“In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; let me never be put to shame.

“Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.” (Ps 31:1, 5, RSV)

CHAPTER FIVE

LOVE

Of the three theological virtues, St. Paul puts love at the very top. “There are three things that last for ever: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of the three is love.” (I Cor 13:13, NIV)

Imitate God’s Love

Love your children even though it has become difficult to do so. Love them as God the Father loves. When he saw his people’s sinfulness, he did not reject them; instead, he persisted by giving them what was most precious in his heart – “his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16, NIV)

Love them as God the Son loves. Jesus said, “You must love one another just as I have loved you.” (Jn 13:34, NJB) At the Last Supper, Jesus knew and predicted that his followers would desert him. “Listen; the time will come – indeed it has come already – when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone.” (Jn 16:32, NJB) Yet he gave himself whole-heartedly to them. You must do no less for your children.

At the same Supper, Jesus showed his service and humility by washing his disciples’ feet; you must exhibit the same humility and dedication to your children.

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (Jn 13:1, RSV) You have loved your sons and daughters ever since they were little babies; now you must continue in that love.

On Good Friday, Jesus was beaten and insulted. He was made to wear a crown of thorns – a symbol of grave dishonour. In bearing the humiliation and suffering inflicted on you by your children’s misconduct, you are giving them a love like that of the Lord your God.

Your Children’s Friends

Parents are naturally suspicious of the company their children keep. They are afraid and distrustful. Their fears are understandable in that friends can be sources of temptation to sin.

One thing you must do is pray fervently. Pray that if the friendships are not from the Lord they will be terminated; and if they are from the Lord, that his guidance will be heeded. Pray for the friends too – you may be the only one who offers prayers for them. Keep them and their families in your permanent list of prayer intentions. Instead of being annoyed, thank God the Father for choosing you as one of his instruments for leading them to him.

Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the

unjust... You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:43–45, 48, RSV)

You may have considered your children’s friends as enemies and the reason for unrest in your otherwise tranquil existence. But now, try unlocking your heart towards them. In this way you may be holding open the door to a short-cut on their path to salvation.

“The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him.” (Lk 15:1, NAB) Why did Jesus associate with sinners? Why was he so approachable? The answer is seen in this reading: “The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples and said, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus said to them in reply, ‘It is not those that are well who need the doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the upright but sinners to repentance.’” (Lk 5:30–31, NJB)

By caring and praying for your children and their friends you may be able to pass on to them Jesus’ call for repentance. Hatred and alienation will not convert, but hospitality and warmth may. It is worth a try.

Don’t forget that your children’s sins are against God and his commandments, not against you. Let God resolve the matter in his own special way. “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom 12:19, 21, RSV)

Forgiveness

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Col 3:12–13, RSV)

Consider how God loves and forgives you, and know that that is how God loves and forgives your children and their friends. Know that that is how you must love and forgive them too.

Some Characteristics of Love

Use the scripture passage below, phrase by phrase, to examine how you can refine your love for the children.

“Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.” (I Cor 13:4–7, NJB)

Sacrifice

Sin is wrong, and we must aim to prevent it in ourselves and in our family. But if we are unable to convince the children, we can walk alongside Jesus and participate in his mission of reparation for sins by personal sacrifices such as fasting or giving up something that we treasure.

In the book of Job, the story goes that this upright man rose early after his children's parties and presented burnt-offerings to the Lord on behalf of each one of them. "For Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This Job did habitually." (Job 1:5, NAB)

The Power of Love

If you love your children you can overcome some of the ill-effects of your own faults in their flawed upbringing. The first book of Peter tells us, "Above all hold unfailing love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Pet 4:8, RSV)

If you love your children, you love God; and by loving God, you can claim what is written in this text: "We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good." (Rom 8:28, NJB)

If you love your children, fear will go away from you. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." (1 Jn 4:18, NIV)

Final Blessing

This is an unselfish prayer: "God, the children are facing the world on their own now; please guide them and look after everything that concerns them – their morals, their eternal destiny, their temporal aspirations, studies, endeavours, decisions, careers, relationships, vocations. Please answer their prayers so that they may more easily believe in you and increasingly turn to you

for friendship. Be with them at every moment. Bless them, Lord; please bless all your people. Let their lives give you abundant glory, honour, and praise. Thank you, Lord, thank you.”

CHAPTER SIX

PEACE

No doubt, this is a time of trials and tribulations for many fathers and mothers. Some of our children have little love or respect for us; they are often rude and disobedient. Some ignore God; they do not go to church. Others are given to sin.

Fellow parents, the following considerations may help to bring a measure of peace to our families.

God

The problems spoken of above originate partly from the devil who attacks God's people. We have to be vigilant but never lose hope. God knows our troubles; he keeps watch over each and every one of us. He protects his sons and daughters. His omnipotence is everlasting and infinitely stronger than any evil Satan can cause. Scripture tells us to do this:

“Bow down, then, before the power of God now, so that he may raise you up in due time; unload all your burden on to him, since he is concerned about you. Keep sober and alert, because your enemy the devil is on the prowl like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, strong in faith and in the knowledge that it is the same kind of suffering that the community of your brothers throughout the world is undergoing. You will have to suffer only for a little while: the God of all grace who called you to eternal

glory in Christ will restore you, he will confirm, strengthen and support you. His power lasts for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet 5:6–11, NJB)

Jesus

We should also be reassured and encouraged by the teaching of Jesus on God’s concern for his errant children. “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” (Mt 18:10–14, RSV)

Ourselves

“Parents, do not irritate your children or they will lose heart.” (Col 3:21, NJB)

To better our relationship with the children we ought to improve our own behaviour. From time to time we ought to examine how we treat our sons and daughters. For example, do our conversations with them consist only of criticisms, castigations, and advice? Do we often go after them to launch verbal brawls? Do we listen to what they have to say with genuine interest? When they return from an outing do we inevitably set about satisfying our curiosity on what

they have been doing with interrogations akin to those coming from a police detective? Do we generally speak less warmly to them than we speak to our pets? When they ask for a favour, is our first unthinking reaction invariably an ugly “No!”?

We have to realize that peace cannot come to our households unless we ourselves cease starting wars. Peace cannot come if we always insist on having the last word. Peace cannot come if we do not sometimes remain discreetly silent in the face of impertinence and ingratitude.

St. Paul says, “When we are cursed, we answer with a blessing; when we are hounded, we endure it passively; when we are insulted, we give a courteous answer.” (I Cor 4:12–13, NJB)

King Solomon makes this wise observation, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Prov 15:1, RSV)

And the first book of Peter tells us, “Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing. For:

‘Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep the tongue from evil
and the lips from speaking deceit,
must turn from evil and do good,
seek peace and follow after it.’”

(1 Pet 3:8–11, NAB)

Consecration Prayer

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Immaculate Heart of Mary:

**I consecrate to you
myself and every member of my family.**

**I consecrate to you
all our relatives and friends.**

**I consecrate to you
all parents and children of every age.**

Help us to be holy.

Grant us peace!

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRAY THE ROSARY

The Rosary is a remarkably adaptable prayer. It can be used as an aid for contemplation, meditation, blessing, adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise. The following illustrates how a father or mother, solicitous about the salvation of their children, can pray with faith, hope and love.

This chapter is taken from *The Rosary – A Worried Parent Prays* by Andrew Jerome Yeung.

Opening Prayer

O my God, I beg of you to listen to this humble prayer offered for the eternal welfare of my family. Please, Father, bring my children back to you in holiness and peace. I ask this in the name of Jesus, in union with the Holy Spirit, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and with all your angels and saints. Amen.

(A) The Joyful Mysteries

1. The first Joyful Mystery

The Annunciation

The angel Gabriel assured Mary: “Nothing will be impossible for God.” (Lk 1:37, NAB)

With you, Lord, all that is good can be accomplished: from the conversion of the most hardened sinners to the unravelling of problems that seem to have no solutions.

Loving Father, you created my children but have not abandoned them to deal with their weaknesses, burdens and sins completely on their own. Thank you for your plan of Redemption, and for the gift of your Son, Jesus – a name so chosen, as the angel explained, “because he will save his people from their sins.” (Mt 1:21, NAB)

2. The second Joyful Mystery

The Visitation

In her *Magnificat* Mary enunciated this consoling truth about God: “And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm ...” (Lk 1:50–51, RSV)

Lord, Mighty One, your mercy does not stop with me; it extends to every generation, to my children, and to their descendants.

Thank you for the many transformations you will draw forth from them as the years go by. There is no limit to your strength and power.

3. The third Joyful Mystery

The Birth of Jesus

On the night Jesus was born, an angel appeared to the shepherds in the neighbouring fields and said, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.” (Lk 2:10–11, NAB)

Dear Jesus, your good news of salvation is for all the people – the just and the unjust, those who go to church and those who do not, the ones who know they need you and the ones who ignore your existence.

From my youth you have corrected me in gradual stages, how can I suppose you will not do the same for my sons and daughters? You are my Saviour; you are theirs too. Lord, help me not to be afraid but to trust you in great joy.

4. The fourth Joyful Mystery

The Presentation

Joseph and Mary, when you consecrated baby Jesus to the Lord at the temple, you consecrated to him the entire Body of Christ. That includes my sons and daughters – brothers and sisters of your first-born Son. Therefore I shall not fear because they are under God’s constant protection and care.

At the time of the presentation, Simeon came into the temple. Seeing Jesus, he blessed God, saying, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.” (Lk 2:29–30, RSV) Lord, just as Simeon commended

himself to you in peaceful resignation, let me rest in you now as I lay at your feet all my concerns for the children. In times of difficulties, or when tempted to despair, may I always call on your holy name: Jesus, you are our salvation; you are our deliverance.

5. The fifth Joyful Mystery

Finding of Jesus in the Temple

On the third day after young Jesus remained in Jerusalem without his parents knowing, they found him in the temple. His mother complained, “My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.” (Lk 2:48, NJB)

St. Joseph and Mother Mary, if you searched so anxiously for Jesus, the perfect Son, surely you are all the more earnestly going after those who have really gone astray. Thank you for your participation in pursuing my children and leading them back.

Jesus, at age twelve, you personally witnessed the suffering which your father and mother went through because of a lost child. How lovingly have you sacrificed yourself to save every son and daughter, every soul, every human being, sparing no effort whatsoever, not even your own earthly life.

You have since assured us regarding your Father’s will: “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day.” (Jn 6:39, RSV)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I thank you for myself too. If you had not looked for me during my life, where would I be now!

(B) The Luminous Mysteries

1. The first Luminous Mystery

The Baptism of Jesus

When John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching him for the baptism of repentance, he testified, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (Jn 1:29, NAB)

Jesus, Lamb of God, Beloved Son of the Father, thank you for identifying yourself with humankind. Thank you for coming to take away our sin – my children’s and mine.

2. The second Luminous Mystery

The Miracle at Cana

Moved by his mother’s loving concern when she confided to him “They have no wine,” Jesus changed six large jars of water into wine. The jars were filled to the brim, and the wine was so good that the steward was prompted to praise his host by remarking, “...you have kept the best wine till now.” (Jn 2:3, 10, NJB)

Jesus, you manifested such great kindness to your mother and her friends in so small a matter; I firmly believe you will perform more important miracles before the end of time – changing her children into saints, filling them to the brim with the utmost best.

Lord, what you did at Cana in Galilee was only the first of countless signs. “He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.” (Jn 2:11, NJB) Jesus, I believe in you too. I believe your miracles can happen in every part of the world, at any moment in time,

under myriads of different circumstances, and to my children as well.

3. The third Luminous Mystery

The Announcement of the Kingdom and the Call to Repentance

“After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: ‘This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’” (Mk 1:14–15, NAB)

Jesus, perhaps the final sin I must repent from is unbelief in you. I need to change; I need to constantly take as true your immeasurable love for your people.

You demonstrated your love again and again in the gospel. “He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.” (Mt 4:23, NAB)

Lord, I must never doubt that you care for me and for my children with all your heart; you will heal our infirmities, both spiritual and temporal; your invitation to conversion is accompanied by a plenitude of graces – “And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” (Jn 1:16, RSV)

4. The fourth Luminous Mystery

The Transfiguration

“And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as

light... and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.'" (Mt 17: 2-7, RSV)

Jesus, majestic and victorious Lord, your Father is pleased with all that you do for your people. I must listen to you. Teach me and help me to know you, so that I may rise and live no more in daily fear for my children.

5. The fifth Luminous Mystery

The Institution of the Holy Eucharist

"Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'" (Lk 22:19, NJB)

"Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he handed it to them saying, 'Drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Mt 26:27-28, NJB)

Thank you, Jesus, for giving your body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

At Mass and Holy Communion I pray with all my heart: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. Only say the word, Lord, and my children will be brought back to health in mind and body, in soul and in spirit."

(C) The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The first Sorrowful Mystery

The Agony in the Garden

At Gethsemane, Jesus, acutely aware of the torment awaiting him at the crucifixion began to feel severe anguish, distress, and grief. “He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.” (Lk 22:44, NAB) And going on a little further he fell on his face and begged, “Abba, Father!... For you everything is possible. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it.” (Mk 14:36, NJB)

Jesus, I suspect one of the things you dreaded so horrendously about the impending crucifixion may have been the gruesome prospect of the nails being driven into your hands and feet. Every time I try to visualize it happening to me I recoil in utter terror. Thank you, dear Friend, for deciding in our favour, for your determination to make reparation for the sins we committed, for submitting to the Father’s will, knowing thereby no one in my family would perish.

2. The second Sorrowful Mystery

The Scourging at the Pillar

“So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, after having Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.” (Mk 15:15, NJB)

Jesus, Isaiah prophesied this about you: “But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He

bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed.” (Is 53:5, NAB)

The prophecy was affirmed in 1 Pet 2:24 (NAB): “By his wounds you have been healed.”

Thank you, Lord, for healing my children through your self-sacrificing suffering.

3. The third Sorrowful Mystery

The Crowning with Thorns

“And they stripped him and put a scarlet cloak round him, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it.” (Mt 27:28–30, NJB)

God of all creation, you accepted insults and insolence in silence for the conversion of my children. I do not fully comprehend the dynamics of this course of action, but sometimes it may be wise to follow your example and do the same in my own home.

4. The fourth Sorrowful Mystery

The Carrying of the Cross

“As they were leading him away they seized on a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus.” (Lk 23:26, NJB)

Lord, like the Cyrenian, I will take up the cross after you. You gave so much of yourself to the children, I will also do my part for them. No matter

what troubling situation they may be in, however uncomfortable I may feel from disruptions, emotional strain, heartaches and inconvenience, whatever needs to be spent – time, energy, money – I will be there for them, in quiet support, in prayerful supplication, in affectionate tenderness.

Scripture tells us: “Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (I Pet 4:8, NAB)

“Love covers all offenses.” (Prov 10:12, NAB)

Lord, thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this. It is an amazing joy.

5. The fifth Sorrowful Mystery

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

On the cross Jesus implored, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34, NAB)

One of the two thieves said to him, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Lk 23:42–43, NAB)

Lord, thank you for forgiveness. Thank you for mercy. Thank you for the gift of Paradise. Truly St. Paul was right in stating, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” (Rom 5:20, RSV)

And, just in case my children have not asked, I now do so on their behalf: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. Jesus, remember them when you come into your kingdom. Into your hands I commit our spirits.”

(D) The Glorious Mysteries

1. The first Glorious Mystery

The Resurrection

Eight days after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to Thomas and pointed out to him, “You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” (Jn 20:29, NJB)

Jesus, my Lord and my God, at this moment I detect no visible signs of spiritual improvement in my children, but I must believe in the absolute power of the suffering, death and resurrection of the Son of God to bring about their repentance and the forgiveness of their sins.

“So it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations...” (Lk 24:46–47, NJB)

On Easter morning, as the women were returning from the empty tomb, Jesus greeted them and said: “Do not be afraid.” (Mt 28:10, NAB) That same evening, his first words to the fearful disciples gathered at the upper room were: “Peace be with you.” (Jn 20:19, NJB) Lord, fill me with faith in you. Let there be peace in my heart, not fear.

2. The second Glorious Mystery

The Ascension

“And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place.” (Mk 16:19, NJB)

“It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.” (Rom 8:34, NAB)

In the presence of the Father, Lord Jesus, you plead constantly for my children. For you love them; you love them much more than I do, far deeper than I can imagine. St. Paul tells us: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:38–39, NAB)

3. The third Glorious Mystery

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

On Pentecost day, Peter reminded the multitude about God’s promise to give the Holy Spirit to his people. “In the last days – the Lord declares – I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions ...” (Acts 2:17, NJB)

Peter continued: “The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God is calling to himself.” (Acts 2:39, NJB)

Holy Spirit, thank you for coming to my children. Thank you for calling them. I know you will instruct them well because Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything.” (Jn 14:26, NJB) Lord of Wisdom, under your inspiration, and at an hour known only to you,

they will respond, they will come to their senses, they will leave the place of sin, and get up, and return to the Father.

On that day, like the parent in the parable of the prodigal son, I will jump for joy and exult with all my heart. I will cry out in ecstatic jubilation, “Let us celebrate! For my children were dead and have come back to life. They were lost, and are found.” (See Lk 15:23–24.) For Jesus had insisted, “I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.” (Lk 15:7, NAB)

4. The fourth Glorious Mystery

The Assumption of Mary into Heaven

“The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:

“In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*: #966)

O Blessed Virgin, full of grace, thank you that in your celestial glory you have not forgotten my children. Thank you for keeping them in your prayers. Holy Mary, profoundly grateful to God, unselfish and generous, I believe you will not rest until you have shared with every single one of your sons and

daughters all the graces which you received from the Lord – so ardently does your motherly heart desire their eternal happiness in heaven.

5. The fifth Glorious Mystery

The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth

Our Lady was “exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*: #966)

Heavenly Queen, we welcome your reign over us. As Jesus advanced in wisdom and in favour before God while under your authority at Nazareth, I ask of you to also guide my children so that they will grow to be like your Son, our Lord and invincible victor. May they be filled with the Holy Spirit and come to the kingdom of the Father, their Creator and benevolent King, there to enjoy fullness of life in glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, thank you for taking care of my children and all your people. Mother Mary, and the entire company of angels and saints, thank you for your loving co-operation in the divine plan of Redemption.

Thank you, God, for blessing me personally. Please continue to increase in me your gifts of faith, hope, and love. Continue to increase in me your gifts of understanding and peace. I will include other families in my intentions each time I pray the most holy Rosary.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

This chapter is for couples whose marriages have been a constant daily struggle. Please let Jesus help. He said, “*Come to me*, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Mt 11:28, NIV)

“Every one who *comes to me and hears my words and does them*, I will show you what he is like; he is like a man building a house, who dug deeply, and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it had been well built.” (Lk 6:47–48, RSV)

You are Blessed

An effortless marriage is one in which there are no problems, and the husband and wife get along very well with each other as best of friends. Not all marriages are like that, however. Those of you who do not live in ideal situations should take heart in knowing that it is in troubled marriages that more opportunities may exist for meritorious conduct. Jesus said, “For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?... And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?” (Lk 6:32, 33, NAB)

Those of you who have to summon all your strength every day to hold your tongue, to stop yourselves from

letting arguments get out of hand, to overlook snarly remarks, to forgive, to make peace... deserve a great deal of praise. You are leading a life that is nothing short of heroic. You exemplify many of the beatitudes that are so dear to Jesus.

“This is what he taught them:

‘Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance.

‘Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

‘Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God.

‘Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.’” (Mt 5:2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, NJB)

And what does ‘blessed’ mean? Blessed ones are those on whom God bestows his special predilection and favour. Continue to live by the beatitudes and you will eventually receive the fulfillment of the promises attached to them.

The Little Ones

“See that you never despise any of these little ones.” (Mt 18:10, NJB)

The ‘littleness’ of your spouse may exhibit itself in many ways. A few examples are given here.

The individual in question is disgracefully ill-tempered, self-centred, and shamelessly demanding. The person harbours an inflated and destructive sense of superiority, gets angry at anything remotely disagreeable, insists on being right and reiterates this supposed rectitude ad nauseum, retells a problem over and over again while putting little effort to finding the right solution, always looks at the gloomy side of things, offers no support in difficult situations but spews forth ugly invectives at everyone instead, poisons the family's minds against you, creates tempests in teacups and makes mountains out of molehills. Every answer to your questions is a dagger-like insult; every request – a threatening ultimatum. The list goes on and on. To live with this man or woman is like walking through a mine-field: a ferocious explosion erupts at any moment with the slightest 'wrong' step. You have to coax and carry this person through countless 'crises.' There is no peace in the home.

How do you handle 'little' people? In the above quotation, Jesus asks you never to despise them. He asks more:

“Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” (Mk 9:37, NJB)

“And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.” (Mt 10:42, RSV)

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’” (Mt 18:21–22, RSV)

Small Kindnesses

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and gave you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” (Mt 25:31–40, RSV)

Your marriage may not be ‘romantic’ in the eyes of the world, but in God’s sight you love greatly if you do kind-hearted things such as occasionally preparing or

organizing a nice meal for your spouse either at home or in a restaurant, giving your spouse a cup of coffee, a greeting, a compliment, friendly support in situations of embarrassment, attention during illness and discomfort, conversation and companionship when the other is imprisoned in loneliness and discouragement.

Amiable Discussion

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.” (Mt 18:15, RSV)

It is fruitful to talk things over with your spouse in a friendly way. This is not done for the sake of justifying oneself or of accusing the other, but to halt the festering of bitterness and resentment.

Bless and Pray

“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.” (Lk 6:28, NJB) To bless people is to speak well of them and to them.

Here is a nice exercise. On a night when you are calm, try to recall something good that your spouse did that day. When you look for goodness you will find it! Perhaps you will gradually get into the habit of noticing and appreciating the positive elements in your marriage.

Pray, both for your partner and for yourself, that there will be healing and conversion. Try to involve your spouse in concerted prayer. Jesus said, “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my

name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Mt 18:19–20, RSV)

Mother Mary

At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, it was Our Lady who noticed something lacking and pointed it out to her Son. “When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’” (Jn 2:3, NAB) He hesitated momentarily, and then performed his famous miracle. Watch.

“Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, ‘Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.’ So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, ‘Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.’” (Jn 2:6–10, NAB)

Thanks to Mary, the celebration was revitalized. The hosts were given an unexpected surprise. They ended up with much more than they were capable of providing – filled to the brim.

Learn from your mother: go to Jesus! Mary’s own instruction to you is no different from what she gave to the servers at Cana, “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5, NAB)

Take Note

Use the following readings as check-points in your relationship with your spouse. They are words spoken by Jesus himself or through his apostle Paul.

“You know that among the gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:25–28, NJB)

“Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required.” (Lk 12:48, RSV)

“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...” (Phil 2:3–7, RSV)

“After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to one another in love, since the whole of the Law is summarised in the one commandment: You must love your neighbour as yourself. If you go snapping at one another and tearing one another to pieces, take care: you will be eaten up by one another.” (Gal 5:13–15, NJB)

“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to

judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire.” (Mt 5:22, RSV)

“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Mt 12:36–37, NAB)

“Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” (Mt 26:52, NAB)

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye?” (Mt 7:1–4, RSV)

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Lk 6:31, NIV)

“As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts,

because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful.” (Col 3: 12-15, NJB)

Live Jesus’ Teachings

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.” (Jn 15:11, RSV) Live by the things that Jesus has spoken to you and his joy will come into your soul. Live by the things that Jesus he has spoken to you and your joy will be full. Live by the things that Jesus has spoken to you and nothing will ever erase that joy. He promised, “So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” (Jn 16:22, RSV)

Live by the things Jesus has spoken and you will find that what God has joined together he will help keep together.

A Simple Prayer

Whenever turmoil arises again with your spouse, or whenever you feel trouble brewing, turn to the Lord in quiet trust with these words, “Jesus, we need you. Help us.” And stay calm. Do not be afraid. Do not be agitated. Do not worry. He will restore harmony. He will do it very quickly. He will bring peace.

CHAPTER NINE

REPENT!

This chapter is for everyone. It is addressed to sinners, but especially to those children and spouses who have been the source of grief to their long-suffering relatives. “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30, NIV)

How we respond to this call for repentance will result in how God will deal with us. There are three general models.

First

The story in the *Book of Jonah* illustrates very well the best case scenario.

Jonah was sent to tell the people of Nineveh that if they continued in their ungodliness they would be destroyed. “Jonah began his journey through the city, and when he had gone only a single day’s walk announcing, ‘Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown,’ the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.” (Jon 3:4–5, NAB)

Even the king reacted positively. He made this decree: “... Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn

from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” (Jon 3:8–9, NIV)

“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.” (Jon 3:10, NIV)

We pray that, like the Ninevites, you will heed God’s warning, and stop offending him and your kinfolks.

Second

When God’s gentle appeals fall on deaf ears, he will apply more pressure.

The *Book of Proverbs* says: “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” (Prov 13:24, RSV)

Again, “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” (Prov 3:11–12, RSV)

In the last book of the Bible God says, “The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God’s creation, says this: ‘I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, “I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,” and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness

may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent.” (Rev 3:14–19, NAB)

Are you experiencing illnesses, accidents, broken relationships, pointed criticisms from friends or foes, family conflicts, failures...? They are not punishments from the Lord, but may have been permitted as promptings for you to set straight something that is not right.

With a contrite heart turn to the Holy Spirit and implore him to help you discover where your problem areas are. Ask him reverently to assist you in repairing the damages you have done to yourself and to those around you.

Third

As a last resort, God may have to deal drastically with the most recalcitrant of his people. “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.” (Heb 10:26–27, NIV)

In the following discourse we hear Jesus alluding to two Old Testament incidents. “As it was in Noah’s day, so will it also be in the days of the Son of man. People were eating and drinking, marrying wives and husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all. It will be the same as it was in Lot’s day: people were eating and

drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but the day Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and it destroyed them all.” (Lk 17:26–29, NJB)

We pray that this last stage will never have to be reached again in any part of the world. God does not want sinners to die, but that they reform. “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? ... For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live.” (Ezek 18:23, 32, RSV)

What Should We Do?

Listen to the people’s question after John the Baptist spoke to them at the river Jordan. “He said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’

“And the multitudes asked him, ‘What then shall we do?’” (Lk 3:7–10, RSV)

God’s reply would be: “I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the

LORD, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him.” (Deut 30:19–20, NAB)

Like the thousands who heard the apostles’ pleas on Pentecost Day, make the resolution to repent! “Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘What are we to do, brothers?’ ‘You must repent,’ Peter answered.” (Acts 2:37–38, NJB)

Serve the Lord

Besides turning back to God, besides avoiding the many dangers that await those who disregard him, besides healing the wounds you have brought about, you can go one step further: take part in the Lord’s work. This is a much better way to resolve your family problems than using all your free time watching television, or listening to music, or talking on your phone, or playing games. Try engaging yourself and your family in performing good deeds for the Lord and for your neighbours.

Matthew the tax collector is an example of someone who answered God’s call and became a very effective instrument in bringing many blessings to His people. “As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples.” (Mt 9:9–10, NAB) Matthew was later chosen by Jesus to be one of his twelve apostles. He is immortalized in the Gospel that bears his name.

Peter and Andrew, too, when they heard Jesus' invitation, accepted immediately. "As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, 'Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him." (Mt 4:18–20, NAB)

Jesus needs labourers to continue the tasks he left for us to do when he ascended into heaven. He will empower his believing disciples. "In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father." (Jn 14:12, NJB) "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest." (Jn 4:34–35, RSV) "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Mt 9:37, RSV)

Will you consider becoming one of Jesus' harvesters in your home or among your acquaintances? Whatever walk of life you are in, there may be one or more persons who, through contact with you, will be saved from a great deal of spiritual hardship because of your courageous and unselfish decision to be allied with the Lord. Will you let yourself be a channel of his graces and redirect your life for the benefit of all?

One of Jesus' many wishes is this: "It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples." (Jn 15:8, NJB) Let his wish be fulfilled

in you and your family, and so bring great glory,
honour and praise to your loving Father who is in
heaven.

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