

HOMILETICS*

11th Sunday after Pentecost (August 2)

GODPARENTS

Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened." (Mark vii, 34)

If the miracle of opening the ear and loosening the tongue of deaf-mute was great, greater is the miracle of Baptism whereby one is made an adopted son of God, and wherein the Ritual uses Christ's words in today's gospel.

But this miracle of grace often shaded by the neglect and abuse of the role of godparents: the Ninong and Ninang.

Duty of Godparents

One day I asked a lady: "How many godchildren do you have?"

"Quite many. Father; I lost count of them. In fact, I can not remember;" was the reply. But this is nothing compared to the number of godchildren that a movie starlet has. More than one hundred.

Now, if you ponder deeper, you wonder how they can take spiritual care of these children. Is not the main duty of a godparent to take care of the spiritual child till death?

And the godparent must see to it that the child is given real Christian moral and religious formation necessary for the child to live a good Catholic life.

* The following sermons of Father Jephthe M. Lucena, OP, had appeared in our July issue (1962) and are reproduced here as a special request.

Qualities of Godparents

Due to this grave responsibility, the Church demands that a godparent should know the rudiments or doctrines of Faith. It follows then that he or she must be a good Catholic, and must have completed the fourteenth year (to comply with the requirements of the law).

Parents who realize the spiritual significance of a godparent, always strive to choose devout and practising catholics among close relatives and friends.

But those who aim for material gain or fame, will take anyone who has a name or connection in Business, Movies or Politics. Yes, this is our Compadre system, a real abuse of the true significance of Sponsorship; and a great evil next to nepotism.

Real Godparents: A Pair

But in church, when you see these Compadres and Comadres, four, five or six pairs of them, do you think that all of them are really godparents of the child? No.

The Church allows only at most a pair of godparents. Only one Ninong and one Ninang for the child. And only this pair may hold the child during baptism. Only this pair has a real spiritual cognation and obligation to the child.

It is wrong for parents to deceive others in believing that they are sponsors when in reality they are not. Parents should designate who are the real sponsors; and who are just honorary sponsors.

It is unjust to the child as well. How many children grow up believing that so and so is his ninong or ninang, only to realize after taking his Baptismal certificate that it was not so.

Parents and godparents, on their part, must do their duty conscientiously, for upon their shoulder rests the happiness or unhappiness of a child.

12th Sunday after Pentecost (August 9)

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

"A certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him: and seeing him, was moved with compassion. And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. And setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him." (Luke x, 33)

The Parish Priest caught twelve year old Rafael, a boisterous and talkative acolyte, chattering in the sacristy; "Next time, I will cut your tongue with a pair of scissors."

At home, Rafael gets the most spanking, for teasing his sisters; at school, he fights with others, big and small.

But in spite of his naughtiness, Rafael was quite a guy. He was a good Samaritan. He prepared a twelve year old playmate for confession. He brought him to the priest in church; they went to confession and received Holy Communion.

How about you? How good a Samaritan are you?

The Good Samaritan

Christ was the first good Samaritan, who journeyed to earth in order to heal a sick humanity. He came to give life to the dead, by dying on the Cross.

And so when He said, "Go, and do thou in like manner," it means not only to help our neighbors in their material needs; but above all, in their spiritual needs also.

Everyone of you can be a good Samaritan. Yes, a good Samaritan to Catholics who seldom go to Mass, to those who have never gone to confession, to those who are not married in church or to those who are not baptized.

If twelve year old Rafael could do it, why can't you?

The Inn

Certainly that boy Rafael brought his friend into the inn; into the inn of God, the Church, when he guided him to confession.

He did in like manner what Christ had done. For the moment, the wounded of soul was anointed and bandaged with Baptism or Penance, he was brought into the Inn of God, the bosom of the Church.

This is the Inn where we drink unto life everlasting; a drink that becomes in us a spring of Life for others; for others whom we would guide back to the Inn of God.

Innkeeper

Now, Christ not only brings sinners back to the fold by means of the Sacraments, but He also takes care of everyone who cooperates with Him.

And He instituted men with powers to take care of souls in His stead.

Look around you; perhaps within your home; a brother, a sister, a cousin or an uncle or an aunt is remiss in his or her religious duties. Perhaps in your neighborhood, there is a sick soul just waiting for your approach.

If twelve year old Rafael could do it, you can too.

13th Sunday after Pentecost (August 16)**FREQUENT CONFESSION**

"Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were made clean." (Luke xvii, 14)

A group of high school girls around the assistant Parish Priest's table were all ears to his talk on Confession, when a chubby lass asked: "Father, the Sisters don't hear confessions, do they?"

"No child; only validly ordained priests duly authorized may hear confessions."

"Then, I don't like to be a Sister, Father."

Then another girl said: "You say, Priests and Sisters ordinarily go to confession once a week. They don't really have mortal sins every week, do they?"

"Not really." Ah, there's the rub. But why the frequent confession?

Confession

First of all, confession as instituted by Christ, is a declaration of personal sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining sacramental absolution. It is necessary to regain sanctifying grace and restore us to our divine filiation.

Nay, it is obligatory, when a person reaches the age of reason or is in mortal sin, or in danger of death.

But there is one point in confession that people often miss to consider; that confession is a strong force against sin; it does not only take away sin, but it prevents sin as well. It does not only give or increase sanctifying grace but it also confers sacramental graces.

Hence, it helps develop holiness and piety; it gives peace to the individual and promotes peace with others.

Frequent Confession

If confession can do such wonders to a soul, then why not frequent confession?

A priest was heard to say, that there are priests who would like to make monks and nuns of lay people by frequent confession.

But were not the Sacraments instituted for our sanctification? If frequent confession does good to priests and nuns; why not frequent confession for the ordinary faithful?

Moreover, every one has a right to obtain wise counsels and guidance to a right Christian living. Where could a layman get these in

a most secret and competent way? The confessional box, by frequent confession.

How Confess Frequently

And talking about this matter, another girl asked: "Do you mean to say, Father, that I can go to confession even if I have no sin, say during the week?"

"Yes," answered the priest.

"How?"

"Just tell the Father any fault you can remember, then mention a grievous sin or a certain venial sin of the past already confessed. Be sure to mention that this particular sin was already confessed before." This provides a sufficient matter for absolution.

"Then you can ask for counsels on how to improve yourself spiritually or how to avoid a particular evil tendency."

To obtain a good result from frequent confession, one must have a regular confessor who is a true lover of souls.

14th Sunday after Pentecost (August 23)

EVERYONE, A SLAVE

"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will sustain the one and despise the other."
(Matt. vi, 24)

The silence of the cloister of a certain convent was broken one late afternoon by the spontaneous laughters of small children. There was an impromptu program; and Nonoy, a five year old boy was gyrating his pelvis the Elvis way amidst the clapping of hands by his brothers and sisters, while he sang for a priest: "Everybody has a Lover."

And, indeed, is not true that everybody has a lover in God? Not only that; everybody is a lover. But is everybody a lover of God?

A Lover is a Slave

Everyone is a lover; and every lover is an adorer; and every adorer is a slave. Whether one's love or deity is something or somebody or **SOMEONE**.

One is always a slave of something or somebody or **SOMEONE**; but not of the three at the same time. For no one can serve two masters at the same time. For he will have the one and love the other. The true passionate slave of something can not be a true lover of **SOMEONE**, of God.

It happens that one who is a slave of something realizes his mistakes, and turns his love to God. And it can happen also that one who is a slave of God, may weaken and turn his affection to something or somebody to such extent as to lose his soul.

Slaves of Passion and Fashion

But how do lovers of God become slaves of inordinate passion? Simple. It is contained in the words of our Lord: "Be not solicitous for your life." Solicitude for things that do not count. Solicitude for worldly life. Because this is followed by negligence and weakening of spiritual life.

What happens when the flesh triumphs over the spirit? Look at the results on the movie screens of most theaters. And the newspapers.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, murders, drunkenness, revellings."

Slaves of True Love

To avoid the triumph of the flesh over the spirit in us, we must strive every day to be faithful to God; to seek every day the reign of divine love within us. How?

Not only by frequent confession and Communion, but most of all, by practising the presence of God within us. For if we are always conscious that God is within us; and we know, He is Divine love, an omni-

potent Love, then who can overcome us? "O Pagibig, kapag ikaw ang nasok sa puso nino man, hahamakin ang lahat masunod ka lamang," says Balagtas. Which expression is just a shade of St. Augustine's "*Amor meus, Pondus meum, eo feror quocumque feror.*"

When you are in constant union with divine love, you will feel spiritual joy and peace; so different from the joy and peace of the worldly. Nay, not only spiritual joy and peace, but patience, kindness, mildness and goodness also towards others.

If love begets love, one's peace of soul can produce peace in others, too. So, let God dominate your being. And you will feel good inside; yes, a goodness that will shine in your thoughts, words and actions.

15th Sunday after Pentecost (August 30)

THE REALITY OF DEATH

"Young man, I say to thee, Arise." (Luke vii, 14)

"What if you die now?" queried a priest to a young lady.

"Nonsense, Father, I am young. I want to enjoy life." This answer echoed in the hospital bed of a 21 year old medical student, a young man, dying of cancer, he was not aware of: "I am young, I want to live. I like to finish my studies."

But the reality of death tells us, that it is no respecter of age. And the facts in every Pediatrics ward are too heart rending to elaborate. Now the question is: How does one live?

The Folly of Youth

The folly of youth about living and enjoying life forever is not unfounded. It is based on the very nature of the spirituality of our soul. For the soul naturally tends to what is eternally good.

But this inclination of the soul to enjoy the supernatural good can be misdirected, even deep down into the quagmire of sins of sensuality. But is this enjoying life?

No! Life without God is not real life. It is not enjoying life. It is death; the death of the soul; the death which should be feared more than the death of the body.

The Reality of Death

Death! It is too real to be ignored. The daily newspapers tell the tales of death. Death in the highway by collision. Death in the alley by brutal stabbing. Death in the lobby by criminal gunning. Death by duel and other natural death which man is heir to. For "it is appointed to man once to die."

But one thing we must never forget: Death is but a herald of a future everlasting life; a life of bliss which our soul craves; or an everlasting life of torment.

The future then that death will herald for us depends on the kind of life we live now. "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall he reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall he reap life everlasting."

After Death

Therefore, a man who walks in spirit, does not fear death. He welcomes it; for he knows what death would bring. Not only life everlasting, not only joy of seeing God and all his dear ones in God, but he will behold the glory of resurrected bodies in Christ.

"How should we look after the final Resurrection?" ask some people. "Father, will my daddy be white haired, and Tito Jesse, bald headed still?" asked a young girl.

No. No more distortions, no more physical defects. "The dead will rise again with the same bodies they had, but the just will be remodelled and transfigured according to the pattern of the risen Christ." One will "rise again in the greatest possible natural perfection"; in complete and perfect physical integrity.

The body of the just will be incapable of suffering, spiritualized, agile and radiant with the glory of the transfigured Christ.