

FATHER'S DAY

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FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

English text is revised by
MICHELLE YOUSSEF
CHRISTINE ROFAEL

FATHER'S DAY

CHRISTIAN SOUL AND FATHERHOOD

I was invited to speak about Father's day, in St. Mary's Coptic Church, in Pasadena. I noticed that some of the priests and fathers who were there had received cards for this special occasion. I feel that this day is in fact not only for the clergymen and fathers, but it is a day for every true believer, regardless of his age or position in the church. Through our faith, we participate in a kind of unique fatherhood.

Once I was participating in a conference in Cyprus. Its topic was the "Church Renewal." The missionaries that attended with us concentrated on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. They referred to Jesus Christ as the Savior, but they ignored His role as our Father.

In the West, some decades ago, one would concentrate on the works of Jesus Christ. One used to ask others, "Do you believe in Jesus? Do you accept Him as your personal Friend?" Today, one focuses on the Holy Spirit as the Source of our renewal. This new movement is called "Charismatic Spirituality."

The early church recognized Trinitarian faith; faith in One God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge the Father, who has adopted us as His own beloved children. He is our Father who cares for us throughout all our lives. We are united with Him through the fellowship of His Only begotten Son, and by the work of His Holy Spirit.

When we become His children, He grants us a kind of fatherhood. It is a unique kind of love towards all human beings. We imitate God our Father who "loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" John 3:16.

In other words, a true believer can attain a general fatherhood, which differs from that of priesthood, through which he practices the following:

❖ He spiritually desires to embrace all human beings in the depth of his heart, as if they were his own beloved children.

❖ He does his best to suffer on behalf of his brethren. He feels happy even to die while others live, to be in shame while others are glorified, to be poor while they become rich, and to be enslaved while they are freed in Jesus Christ.

"So then death is working in us, but life in you" 1 Cor. 4:12.

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls, though the more abundantly I love, the less I am loved" 2 Cor. 12:15.

"For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong" 2 Cor. 13:9.

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more" 1 Cor. 9:19.

Thus we can say that father's day is a day for every true believer who desires to be in the likeness of the Father, the Lover of mankind.

FATHERHOOD AND MATURITY

As we celebrate Father's Day we remember that through the divine grace of God every true believer has a mature soul (1 Cor. 16:13).

We see in our daily life that many children have mature souls. They can be called fathers, for they take their lives seriously. They are loving and they are not selfish. While many old men and women have childish souls, for they are selfish, narrow-minded and immature.

St. John the Baptist had a mature soul when he was just a babe in his mother's womb, while many of the Pharisees were babes in their thoughts and behaviors.

St. Paul says, *"We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine..."*
Eph. 4:14.

Origen says that at the end of the world we will see many children as men (*spiritually mature*), while many old men and women as just babes (*spiritually immature*).

On Father's Day we ask God our Father to grant all of us his wisdom, that we may truly become spiritual parents to others through the love and the work of the Holy Spirit.



STRANGE FATHERHOOD

About twenty years ago, an old man met me in St. George's church in Sporting, Alexandria. He said to me, "I came here to complain about someone."

I asked him, "Whom do you speak of?"

He replied, "You."

I was astonished, for I had never met him before. Therefore I asked him, "Why?"

He replied, "My grandson, who confesses to you, is successful in his studies, but he spends more than three hours each day in prayer and he fasts a great deal."

I said, "I'll try to encourage him to be moderate."

After about one year, the old man returned to Alexandria. When I saw him, I expected him to be angry because his grandson had not changed his ways.

He said to me, "Do you remember me? Last year, I complained because my grandson exaggerates in his worship of God. Now I want to tell you that **he is my father, and I am his son!**"

"Why is that?", I asked.

He replied, "I learned a lot from his life. I had never confessed, yet, now I repent and wish to confess. His life has touched the depths of my heart. I hope that I can imitate his example!"

Thus through true spiritual maturity the grandson became a father to his grandfather!



RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

Mature fatherhood is not just emotional, but it is to be in the likeness of the Holy Father, in such ways as:

✝ God the Father sanctifies the freedom of man, He never obliges us to accept Him or to obey Him. In our turn, we must respect others' personalities, gifts and ideas. We do not ask them to be a copy of us.

✝ Through love, God the Father sent His Only-Begotten Son into our world. He lived among us, as one of us, spoke with us in our own language and even respected our culture. May we also, through true love, enter into the worlds' of others, like the world of children, or that of youth, that we may deal with them with their own language and respect their concepts and thoughts. The successful father is one who knows how to deal with his children as if he were one of them.



SAYINGS OF
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
ON
FATHERHOOD

"We do not admire St Paul the Apostle for raising the dead or for healing a leper, we admire him for sayings such as, *'Who is weak and I am not weak?! Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?'*" 2 Cor.11: 29 These words are more powerful than the ability to do thousands of miracles. For these words are more precious than pearls!"

"I am a father, full of loving-kindness...In accord with St. Paul, I remark *'My little children, for whom I labor in birth again...'* Gal. 4:19."

"Every mother cries while she is in labor. So I do the same."

"Nothing is more dear to me than you; nothing, not even the light!"

For the sake of your repentance I am ready to joyfully offer my eyes ten thousands times, if it is possible!

For me, your salvation is very dear, more precious than the light.

What is the advantage of the rays of the sun if the grief of your non-repentance darkens my eyes.

My hope is lost, if you do not progress?!"

"I love you, I want to be dissolved in you. You are my father, mother, brother and child!"

"If I can open my heart for you to see its depths, you will see that it embraces you: women, children and men! This is the power of a lover! It makes the soul wider than heaven!"



***LET ME BE IN YOUR LIKENESS,
O HOLY FATHER***

✝ How wonderful is Your love, O Holy Father,
for You embrace all Your creatures by Your love,
and open the gates of Your heart for my comfort and rest!

✝ You have sent Your Only-Begotten Son as my Savior,
to be my Friend and the Groom of my soul,
bestow upon me Your Holy Spirit to dwell within me!

✝ What can I do in response to Your love,
O heavenly Father?
Grant my poor soul to be in Your likeness.
Give my heart the depth to believe in You,
and bear all men through love!

✝ Grant me the shadow of Your Fatherhood.
When my soul leaves her childish immaturity,
when she leaves her selfishness,
I want to be a father,
I desire to love all Your creatures.

✝ I am ready to be enslaved
in order to grant freedom to many,
I hope to suffer for the comfort of all,
and to die so that all may live.
Glorify everybody, so that I will be the last!
I want to be mature in my love!

✝ Thank You my Heavenly Father,
for You sanctify my free will.
Grant me Your Spirit
so that I will also respect others' freedom!
You sent Your Beloved Son unto my world,
to attract me by love to Your heaven.
Grant me Your wisdom to enter other's worlds through love,
to attract them to participate with me in Your glorious heaven!

✝ ✝ ✝