Mother's Day
Rolling Meadows - 1965

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IN NOMINE JESU

Ephesians 6: 1,2 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.

HONOR YOUR PARENTS

The divine institution of marriage and the family stands at the head o the list of human relationships. It is no accident that the family is the basic unit of human society. Community and nation, wherever they exist, are made up o family units. As the family goes so goes the nation. And at the very center of the family God has placed mother. As the mother goes so goes the family. Of the Epistle lesson which I read from Proverbs - someone may say, What a fruitless life! She hasn't done anything, really, except work at home. And yet, look at what happens. Her husband has the feeling of ease when he sits in the council of the righteous among the elders of the land. He knows his household is well organized and that one of the hardest tasks, the administration of a home, is in good hands. And her children rise up to call her blessed. In those two things you have the reward that comes finally to those that are the best and greatest of women of the world. They have no fears of growing old, for age brings them ne honors and a deeper love.... They tell the story of the Breckinridges of Kentucky - that wonderful family that gave us four of the greatest statesmen which the United States has ever had. Four of the men were home one time for Christmas. A they were gathered around the table, one of them said rather jokingly to his mother, Don't you think you were a little strict with us when we were younger? Just that quickly, but with kindness, there came the answer, Ralph, when you have raised four sons as fine as the sons that I have, you can begin talking to me about rearing children.

The attitudes of children toward mother and father will affect every other relationship they have. A boy who has not learned to honor his parents will not honor anyone else. A girl who has not learned the lesson of obedience to parents will not respect other authority. You children often make yourselves hard to love. I tell you this bluntly, because in order to save souls you must sometimes speak boldly. Parents frequently have to exercise a great deal of grace --

that is, undeserved love toward their children. Grace is love of a high order - something like the love of God for people who are rebellious and hostile toward Him - the love that brought the Son of God to the Cross.

We parents have to remind ourselves constantly that children are gifts of God. God loves them and cares for them. To have children is both a privilege and a responsibility. Honor and respect constitute a two-way street. It is much easier to be a respectful child when you have a father and mother who not only demand with what they say, but command respect by what they are. A good many family troubles rest squarely on the shoulders of parents. Children are supposed to do what they are told to do, but they are more readily inclined to do what their parents are doing. Fathers and mothers cannot excuse themselves from responsibility with the simple plea that they are what they are and cannot help themselves.

Boys and girls grow up. That is what they were meant to do. Gradually they outgrow their complete dependence upon parents. The period when children begin to make their own decisions is always difficult, both for them and for parents. Growth is not easy for the simple reason that it does not take place overnight - but occurs in fits and starts. That is why it is so hard, especially during the period of adolescence, for you young people to understand your parents, and for them to understand you. Often you are unhappy, and your parents are unhappy. You feel they do not give you enough credit for being a responsible person, and they feel you do not give them enough credit for knowing when you will be able to accept the kind of responsibility you think you ought to have. One thing, however, never changes. Children may outgrow everything else, but they never outgrow their duty to honor their parents. No matter how old I get, I am held by God to honor my parents. I accept this duty gladly - more gladly today, I must confess, than I did when I was growing up. I am glad today that my parents held me to my duty, and I count it a privilege to give them the honor which is their due.

Honor means consideration. It presupposes, of course, that parents give consideration to their children - that they do not attempt to control their chil-

dren after they have reached the age of maturity - that they pray for their chil-
dren and for the wisdom to guide them properly - that they consider the complain
of their children with both firmness and understanding. But the obligation of
honor really rests upon children. Honor means consideration - that children obe
their parents in all things, even when they don't altogether understand - that
they endure with patience the weaknesses of their parents - that they understand
and forgive - and that they look out for their parents when parents are no longe
able to look out for themselves. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for
this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with
a promise), that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.

We cannot live our lives independent of God or independent of each othe
God arranged things so that the world is set in families. He wants it that way.
His own Son was born of a woman, set into a human family to live our life, and
become a part of our history. Jesus never failed to honor His parents. Helping
His father with his carpentry and running errands for His mother, He did every-
thing for them He could - and they did everything for Him they could. Following
the incident in Jerusalem, where He had to tell them that He had another Father
whose business He had come to carry out, He went down to Nazareth and was obedien
to His parents. His mother remembered this fact, and that is why it is reported
to us. Jesus grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man. It could not be
otherwise. On that dark day when He finally hung on the Cross, He remembered His
mother. She was there. He did not fail to notice her. His last thought was how
to take care of her.

Surely His is an example for all of us. Everyone who loves the Lord
Jesus, receiving from Him the assurance of forgiveness, life, and salvation, must
take seriously this commandment to honor mother and father. They will show con-
sideration for parents not because they have to, but because they want to. They
want to do it for Him - Who loved them and gave Himself for them. The Christian
faith, more than any other, exalts the family. Sidharta Gotama, prince of India,
ran away from his wife and child at the age of 29 while they were asleep. He is

the man who is called Buddha, the enlightened one, because he sought a life alone in rugged and terrifying individualism to discover the answer to the riddle of life. This is not the way of Christ, or of the Christian faith.

It has become commonplace in our day to feel that parents have really raised their children who have given them everything. They give them their way and their will. They give them everything made of chrome, steel, stone, plastic, wood, glass, wool, nylon, and cotton, and what have you. They could give their children the whole world, and yet what profit is there in it if in the process they lose their own soul? Those who rise up to call their mothers blessed are great men standing in great places who knew what order and honor meant - who were brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is difficult for us to understand what that poor Chinese refugee father in Hong Kong meant when he said that he and his family had a lovely home but they did not have a house to put it in. How many people in our country have lovely houses but no home to put in it? It is probably a symptom of our time that mothers would rather read Better Homes and Gardens than the Bible.

The Bible wants us to be real people - the kind of people who know what love means, and know how to practice it. Real love comes from Christ. That is the whole point of the Christian faith. It begins in repentence and follows up with faith in Christ, who gave Himself in love for us. It accepts the gift of forgiveness, extended in love - love that is completely unselfish. It winds up with that same kind of love issuing forth from an ordinary human heart - from one man to another, from one man to one woman, from father and mother to children, and from children to parents. Only the love of God in Christ can make a family what it is intended to be - the kind of family where fathers and mothers, faithful-ceremonies of bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, and where children are a blessing rather than a curse - where they regard their parents as standing in the place of God to them. This is the kind of family Luther had in mind when he wrote his explanation to the Fourth Commandment: We should fear and love God that we do not despise our parents

and superiors nor provoke them to anger, but honor, serve, obey, love, and esteem them. To say that is to underscore the words of the apostle: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. Amen.