

Learning to Live as A Son: It's All About Love

Homily by Fr. Phillip Scott to the Missionaries of the Cross, 10-9-2024

It is all grace, our part is to cooperate

The topic of this retreat is “learning to live as a son of God and ceasing to live as an orphan.” It takes a long time. In fact, it’s grace. But, as Saint Augustine said, “He who created you without you will not save you without you”. So, though all is grace, we need cooperation. In the first reading from Galatians, the Christians want to go back to what they thought was security, the law, and rely on their own efforts to be justified. But Paul already has already taught that faith justifies you, grace justifies you.

Born again: The gift of entering the divine family

The new life in Christ is an awesome gift. In fact, it’s out of this world. So, God has to give us a gift. God has to give us ears that hear and eyes that see in a new way. He describes it in many ways, such as a new wine. But God has developed in us a palate, a desire for what he wants to give us. It begins from zero. We have to be born again (John 3,5). We have to let go of living as a natural family and learn how to live in the divine family, the Trinity.

Trust before understanding

The first thing He asks for is goodwill. The angel said it to the shepherds: “peace to men of goodwill.” So, we need goodwill and docility to learn this path. St. Paul says in Corinthians 2,9: “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it occur to man what God has in store for those who love him.” So, what God has in store for you and me in this new pathway is to learn to live as a sons in the Son Jesus, and with Jesus living His sonship in us. It is another world! So, we need goodwill, and we need to learn to grow in trust. Fiat. Because what God has in store for us is of another world.

It’s to learn to live on earth as it is in heaven. Now, for that to happen, God needs to allow stuff that, at times, might give us a charlie horse between the ears. We don’t understand, and so much of this path is done without understanding, but it’s about slowly learning to trust even when we don’t understand. And that’s why God gives us an awesome gift when He puts us in a position of need.

Knock and ask

Today, in the Gospel, the imagery in his parable is from the Middle Eastern world of that time. A family lived in a one-room house, including the animals. So, a man comes in the middle of the night and wants three loaves of bread, knocks, and, imagine, not only will he get the children up and the wife up, but also the animals in there. So soon, you’ll have Noah’s Ark in there, making noises. Well, once the animals get involved, guess what? Everything becomes loud. And he’s saying, “shh, I can’t get up now.” That’s the human response. But Jesus wants to show how different His Father is. God the Father always will give. It might not be what we’re asking, but he will only give because he is love. God the Father would always seek us, though we might not seek him. John 15,16: “It’s not you who chose me, but I who chose you.”

Disciple: One who hears in silence

But there's something that we need to learn, and it's at the very beginning of the Gospel when Jesus spoke to His disciples. The Greek word for 'Disciple' means "one who hears", so we must begin learning to listen.

One of Jesus' greatest complaints is, "You have ears, but do not hear. You have eyes but do not see." And the way we develop a pathway, a new way of seeing and hearing, is silence. The love language of God is silence. He wants to develop that capacity in us. He knows that there are so many voices out there: the devil, ourselves, so many, but there's one voice we must seek, distinguish, decipher and discern. Jesus himself said in John 10, "My own, know my voice." We need to know the voice of Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit; the voice of the Father is different from Jesus. The personality of the Father is different than Jesus'. So, we need to develop that capacity, and for that, we need to beware of noise. Pope Benedict said: "There's a tyranny of noise".

Jesus wants to assure us that His Father is different than men who say, "I don't want to help you. It's too late." Because God is always acting. St. Thomas Aquinas said that God is pure act. He's always acting; in fact, He's never not acting. He's never not listening. And His acting is always love. He's never not involved on your behalf and my behalf for our good because He's love. So, for God to begin teaching us, we need to enter this process, which leads to living as sons.

Suffering

We need to lose control, we need to be weakened, and that's why He allows suffering. Suffering doesn't kill you; in fact, it fills you with life once you learn how to suffer correctly. God wants to give us something that is out of this world. In so many new ways, He wants to stuff us with the Holy Spirit so that He will rule our nature and allow us to live in a supernatural way.

He sends the Holy Spirit so that we may see with new eyes and hear with new ears. And, as it says in Ezekiel 36, He wants to give us a new heart, which is ultimately not just a new human heart; it's His heart (human and divine), but he needs our permission. He needs our fidelity. St. Paul writes about "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1,5 and 16,26). And sometimes, for us to learn that process, we need to learn how horrible it is to disobey God and obey the devil, how horrible sin tastes, and how horrible it is when we say "my will be done." We hurt ourselves. Sometimes, we bring a lot of that suffering on ourselves. Sometimes, we are sowing what we reap. But that's all with God's parenting. We don't realize, at first, that He's trying to parent us because He's a good Father. In fact, He's the best of fathers. Until we realize that behind what we're suffering is a voice that wants to parent us, father us, and mother us to Our Lady.

God also asks, seeks, and knocks

The Gospel began by saying, "Ask, seek, and knock." Something happens in this journey, little by little: As God has our attention, guess what happens? He begins to ask, He begins to knock, He begins to seek, and the tables are turned. When at first our prayer was our list of "please do this, please do that," my 'laundry list', as we say, that I bring to God, eventually grows into silence, and we begin to understand. It's Him who really has the most important thing to say. It's I who needs to learn because He hears me, in fact, better than I can imagine, and He understands me more than I understand myself. Then I begin to say, "What would you like? What is it you

want to talk about?” And the more I ask Him that question, you know what the theme usually is? It’s about love, about us, about our hearts. Now, why would that be?

It's all about love

I finish by quoting 1 Jn 4,18: “Perfect love casts down fear.” When a son is learning how to live in Christ and Christ in him, little by little, what begins to grow in him is the awareness that I am loved and loved and loved and loved. I am loved in front, behind, above and below. In fact, everything, everything, everything is about love. Even what we don’t understand. It’s all about love, and that’s what God wants. The topic ends up more than just asking and seeking, it is growing in capacity to be loved so He can begin to love through us. It begins in love and ends in love because love is married to truth and to His will.

It’s all about love, grounded in truth that fulfills His will. It’s all about love and He’s the most loving, loving, loving, loving of fathers. So, we began by asking Our Lady to take us by the hand. We ask her now as a beautiful gardener that she spread these graces that God has given us, that she tills the soil through the power of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, that our little hearts will become as Elizabeth Santa Isabel de la Trinidad said, “a piece of heaven in Jesus’ name.”