

Who's In Control?

Super Nanny is a recent television program that is a lesson in what happens to children when they are given control of their parents. When children discover there are no consequences for negative behaviors they progressively display worse behavior until the parents reach a boiling point. On the program parents are taught by the "Super Nanny" how to gain control of their children and consequently regain peace in their home. Knowing that there are complexities involved in understanding all the dynamics which motivate a child to become progressively worse, the course of a runaway child is no different from that of a runaway adult.

Children perceive discipline from parents as an expression of concern and love. The failure of parents to discipline gives a child the message that they are not important. Discipline can be defined as creating a structured environment in which actions have measurable consequences. The Super Nanny creates a "naughty place, corner or room" to which a child must go following inappropriate behavior. Before being able to return and join family activities the child is confronted eye-to-eye by the parent. After questioning the child about their inappropriate behavior, an apology results and the child is set free from the "naughty place." Great Lent is in many ways a place to which we voluntarily go in order to re-discover the love and discipline of our heavenly Father.

Being that God is a loving God, Who desires that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; the direction of one's obedience dictates the type of discipline that is received. "You know, do you not, that to whom you present yourselves slaves in regard to obedience, his slaves you are to whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? (Rom. 6:16)." There are two Ways a person can live, either the way of life in the Spirit or, the way of death in isolation from God. God becomes the Father of those who choose to love Him. Pure love is a voluntary movement of the heart that is not forced or coerced through fear or intimidation. For those who discipline their hearts in obedience to God, grace is received which becomes the disciplining principal for the soul. The grace of the Holy Spirit is God's voice (our conscience) which acts to guide thoughts and feelings correcting and disciplining. "And we are His witnesses of these words, and also the Holy Spirit Whom God gave to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32)." The way of death is living without obedience to God. "The one who believeth in the Son has everlasting life; and the one who is disobedient to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (Jn. 3:36)." Our culture is stained with masses living in obedience to their own wills and the wrath of God. In God's wisdom, He created us in such a way that if we choose to live disobediently, sin brings its own negative consequences. Ultimately sin is bitter, it darkens the soul, leads to despair, anger, hopelessness, anxiety, lust, pride and spiritual death.

Great Lent opens each year with the invitation to submit once again entirely to Christ and His Lordship. Lent is a place to go and be confronted eye-to-eye by Christ for

inappropriate behaviors. Voluntarily submitting the soul to the "eyes of God" creates a contrite heart from which He cannot turn away.

Lent is a call to stand continually before the eye of God, exposing our inner wounds, the passions which make us their masters. Once a passion is revealed it can be healed by deliberately breaking slavery with the sin and submitting obediently to God as master. He then sends His grace which alone heals. Prayer is a standing before the presence of God, naked and stripped of all pride and ego. Obedience is greater even than fasting because it sets the heart at peace with God and makes one's fasting fruitful. Fasting without prayer creates Pharisees who wash only the outside yet inside are full of dirt.

By attending the divine services of Lent, each one serves to heal the inner wounds or the bad habits which enslave the will. Holy Communion is offered twice during the week as a way of bringing divine assistance. It compels one to prepare properly with obedience, fasting and prayer. Great Compline is a penitential reflection which compels the soul in compunction. With contrite hearts the realization is made that God is always with us no matter what condition our soul may be and that it is us who have abandoned our obedience to His righteousness. As the psalmist said: "Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Hell, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. (Psalm 139:7-14)."