*Fatherhood and the Holy Name of Jesus*

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In the Gospel we have heard the description of Jesus asleep in the boat on a stormy lake. The Apostles are terrified. They see no other chance of survival except by calling upon Jesus: “Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?” Jesus wakes up and says to the storm: “Quiet, be still.” The storm ceases and the good Lord then says to them: “Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?”

In our Catholic scriptural tradition, the *boat* often signifies the Church of Christ (e.g. Noah’s Ark as symbol of the Church). Thus in this Gospel story, we see the image of Christ being in command of His Church in the midst of storms. Jesus remains in the center, guiding the Church to the safe harbor of heaven, even when it seems that He is sleeping and has let the Church drift astray.

Also in our Catholic tradition the family is called the “domestic Church,” with the Christian father having a Christ-like role in the family. On this Father’s Day weekend, we pray for you fathers as you guide your family safely through the storms of life into the harbor of heaven. Your strength and confidence as leader of your family will be an act of love for your wives, and will be noticed and absorbed by your children.

Along these lines I remember the story of a young girl, about 7 years old, who fell asleep in the car as her family was returning from a long road trip. When the family arrived home, the father lifted his sleeping daughter from her car and carried her upstairs to her bedroom. On the way upstairs she woke up and at once felt secure in her father’s arms. She really was strengthened at that moment in her confidence in her father’s love for her, and consequently, in her beauty and worth as a beloved daughter. When, in later years as an adult woman, she ran into a difficult situation, she would recall the strength of her father’s love for her as particularly expressed during that one evening in her youth. That memory gave to her the strength to be strong in whatever storm that she had to endure.

Fathers, if at times it seems that Christ is gone, don’t worry: call upon Him when He seems to be sleeping or absent. The Apostles learned this truth of the importance of an increasing trust in the power of Jesus. There would come a time, however, after His Ascension into heaven, when they would learn to use the power of his name, “Jesus,” to calm storms, to cast out demons, to heal the sick, and to deliver from all forms of evil.

Fathers, you also have this power to invoke the power of His name as a protection and intercession for your family.

What great strength there is in the Holy Name of Jesus! The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

“*But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. . . . The name ‘Jesus’ contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray ‘Jesus’ is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies”* (CCC 2666).

“*The invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the Holy Name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases, but holds fast to the word and ‘brings forth fruit with patience.’ This prayer is possible ‘at all times’ because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus”* (CCC 2668).

Fathers, with the name of Jesus in your hearts and on your lips, why fear anything? Trust in Jesus and take to heart the words of Pope John Paul II, which summarize in many ways the message of his pontificate: “Be not afraid!”

Do not fear those things that can harm your body but cannot harm your soul (cf. Mt 10:28). St. Augustine wrote in his *City of God*: “Evil men fear what cannot harm them: war, pestilence, sickness, and barbarians.” We Christians do not pull back from those things attack us physically; rather we fear only sinning and separating ourselves from the Lord God. St. Louis, king of France (after whom the city in Missouri is named), once wrote to his son: “My son, I would rather see you die than for you to commit one mortal sin.” What great love St. Louis had for his son in teaching him that union with Jesus and the precious gift of heaven are inestimable goods that must be preserved at all costs.

Fathers, invoke the name of Jesus for protection of your homes. Write in your own hand the Holy Name and place it above the main door of your house. You will see that the presence of the Holy Name will be a great protection against evil intruders, fire, and the invasion of all types of moral evil, provided you have faith in His Name.

When you wake up in the morning, at once call upon the Name for blessing and protection of your family. In your own words, pray something like this: “In Your the Holy Name, Jesus, I ask you to bless my wife and children…may we all be protected from all evil today and may we grow together more and more in the love of Jesus Christ.”

The Holy Name of Jesus can be a great protection against the temptations against purity that may enter into your home. When you feel temptation, say: “Jesus, pure and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours.”

The Mother of Jesus also can help you in preserving purity in the home. I know from experience and from another’s testimony about the power of Our Lady against Internet pornography. I encourage you to put an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary on your computer as the desktop background or “wallpaper.” This image of Mary is really powerful and will remind you and your family to pray to her whenever you step inside the World Wide Web. Further, be strong and insist that all computers in your home be placed in common rooms (not in bedrooms), so that you and your family will not fall into temptation because you all are outside of the gaze of other family members, whose presence at times can be your best safeguard against pornography.

Are you worried about your work and finances like most fathers right now? Consecrate your work to Jesus and call upon his name. Do not fear about your money. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said to a priest who was stressed about finances: “Don’t worry: God has a lot of money.” Isn’t that the case! The Lord may be allowing this financial trial in your life in order to purify you, for many men easily get puffed up and proud because they become too attached to money. One cannot serve both God and mammon (cf. Mt 6:24).

One of the few times that Jesus referred to someone as a “fool” was when he told the story of the rich man who tore down his barns in order to build bigger ones: “[The rich man said to himself]: ‘*Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!’ But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God."* (Lk 12: 16-21).

Can any of you by worrying add a moment to your lifespan? If even the smallest things are beyond your control, why be anxious about the rest? (cf. Lk 12:25-26).

Simplify your life and say name of Jesus repeatedly with great love, and then you will find that you will accomplish more work in less time, with greater detachment from money. Time will slow down for you and you will see that spiritually and humanly you will be more at peace and will always be able to provide for your family. Further, the good angels will help you get things done even when you are unaware that something is getting done.

Thomas Edison had a house that he filled with many of labor saving devices that he invented. Once he invited a couple to the house in order to show to them these inventions. At the end of their visit he asked them what they had thought. They were overall very impressed, but they did complain to him that they had trouble opening the gate that led into the front yard. They asked: “Can you not invent a gate that is easier to open?” Edison smiled and then said: “Oh, that gate! Let me explain: every time you open that gate you are pumping ten gallons of water into the tank on the roof.”

In the same way you will go about your daily work in union with Jesus, and at times you will exert great effort without seeing the fullness of the positive impact that your work has on people around you. This is the Christian apostolate: to go doing about good as Jesus did (cf. Acts 10:38), even when you are not aware of it.

Thus are some of the ways you can fight against the storms of the *world* and the *flesh* that pound against the boat of the domestic Church, the family. How about the storm of the *devil*? Against the Evil One we pray to God for protection: “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that the first meaning of *evil* is the Devil: “deliver us from the Evil One” (cf. CCC 2851).

If you ever sense evil in the house or work, such as spirits of anger, of envy or discord or lust, pray the name of Jesus for deliverance, Who will give you strength against the Evil One. I can personally attest as a priest that the demons fear the Name of Jesus. And so use this name with great confidence in casting out the evil influence of the demons from your family.

Further, as father you are the leader of prayer in the family. I encourage you to lead your family in prayer, such as praying Grace before meals and the family Rosary. “The family that prays together, stays together.” The Rosary will help to break evil influence on your family. The devil and his minions have no chance against you if you surround your family with this chain of prayer, particularly in the Hail Mary when we pray the Holy Name: “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb *Jesus*.”

Once while exorcising a demon, an exorcist pulled a Rosary out of his pocket and immediately the demon cried out: “Take away that chain, take away that chain…the one with the Cross on the end. She whips us with that chain.” On another day, the demon said: “But you are so few who say it [the Rosary] compared to the whole world! It is just as well for me that it should be so, because it harms me.” Indeed, St. John Vianney called the Rosary the scourge of the devil. Therefore Christian man and father needs to take up this spiritual weapon in our fight against the powers of hell.

Fathers, our decaying society is making life increasingly more difficult for you. Your boat is in the storm and Jesus may seem to be asleep. You feel nailed to the Cross, and the world is trying to beat you down, emasculate you, fashion you into a harmless nice guy. And through this all you may feel all alone.

Now, then, is the time to bond closely with your fellow Catholic men, and to “push for the summit.” Call upon the Name of Jesus to give you the love of the His Sacred Heart, and let Jesus heal your heart through Confession (but to be healed, you must forgive your own fathers, either living or dead, of their offenses against you). Make the reception of Holy Communion the very center of your week, and then you will know better what it means to be a Christian father: to lay down your life for your family in imitation of Christ, Who laid down His life for the Church.

Finally, the greatest gift that you can give to your children is a profound love for your wife. I repeat: the greatest gift that you can give to your children is a profound, Christi-like, sacrificial love for your wife. For your children learn about human and Christian love from watching how you and your wife interact, how the two of you love each other.

Do not let the waves of fear, anxiety or doubt overwhelm you. Trust in Jesus and the power of His Name, and be not afraid. St. Bernard wrote: “*Write what you will, I shall not enjoy it unless it tells of Jesus. Talk or argue what you will, I shall not relish it if you exclude the name of Jesus. Jesus is to me honey in the mouth, music in the ear, a song in the heart*.”

May the name of Jesus be in your heart and on your lips. Follow the venerable Catholic custom of bowing your head at the mention of the Name of Jesus, and breathe this Name in your prayers, and then your heart will slowly be inflamed by the fire of His Sacred Heart, and thus you will help Jesus to reclaim the world for Him and help establish His Kingdom

Let us help to reestablish the Kingdom of Christ with the same spirit and zeal that led Robert the Bruce (the same historical person depicted in *Braveheart*) to inspire his troops to victory, although in an indirect way. Bishop Fulton Sheen tells the story of how Robert the Bruce wanted very much to join the Crusaders in their fight to liberate the Christian holy places. But in 1329 he died before he could join the expedition. Just before his death Bruce asked his friend, Sir James Douglas, to remove his heart from his dead body and to take it with him on the Crusades. Sir Douglas followed his friend’s wishes and placed Bruce’s heart in a leaden casket, which was then take by the Crusaders.

Sometime later, during a particularly intense battle outside of a fortress in the Holy Land, the Crusaders were being beaten back by the Muslims and were losing courage. The battalion leader of the Crusaders, seeing that his troops were losing courage, asked for the heart of Robert the Bruce. Then standing up tall before his men in the midst of battle, the leader held up the heart above his head and shouted: “Where the heart of Bruce goes, there go ye!” And he threw the heart of Bruce over the wall of the fortress, thus rallying the troops to go on to conquer the fortress.

Men, go forward now from this church, with the Holy Name of Jesus on your lips and in your heart. And take the Heart of Christ, throw It into the world, and so regain your courage that you may go out to win the battle against the kingdom of darkness and help reestablish the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Amen.