

Archbishop Smith: Father's Day

This coming Sunday, Dads will be the centre of attention. On Father's Day, we rightly celebrate our fathers, and do what we can to thank them just for being Dad and looking after us, offering us wisdom, serving as our role model, and so on. For those of us whose fathers have died, it is an occasion to thank God for their legacy, and pray for their eternal rest and peace.

Of course, we realize with sadness that the experience of growing up with good fathers is not universal. Often we hear commentators point to the lack of a father in the life of a child – especially when this happens through abandonment or neglect – as profoundly detrimental to a child's development.

On Sunday we shall hear Jesus point to the Father of us all, the truly good Father who embraces everyone in a love that does not distinguish among persons. In fact, in the various Gospel accounts we hear Jesus doing this often. And no wonder. The reason he has come among us is to draw us into a relationship with himself so that we can share in his own relationship, as Son, with the Father in heaven! By his dying and rising, he has made his Father ours. This gift reaches us in Baptism when, through the union it gives us with Christ, we are made sons and daughters of the Father. God adopts us, and makes us His own!!! We all have a Father!!

The Gospel passage we shall hear on Sunday is taken from that of St. Matthew (10: 26-33). The context is the teaching given by Jesus to the disciples about not needing to be afraid in the face of persecution. That they might know the reason why they (and we) need not fear, whether in the face of persecution or any difficulty, Jesus points to the Father's love, which notices and responds to even the tiniest detail of our lives, precisely because we are immeasurably precious in His eyes. The analogies we shall hear Jesus use are arrestingly beautiful: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Counting the hairs on our heads always seems to catch the attention of children when they hear it. That's impossible! Just so, but only for us; not for God. Admittedly, on this score there are some of us whose follicle challenges make God's job a little easier, but the point remains powerful: not that the counting is impossible, but that even details we fail to notice or that lie beyond our power to seize do not escape the Father's notice. Nothing in our lives lies outside His concern. He is a Father who notices everything, and takes care of everything if we but turn all things over to Him.

So, indeed, don't be afraid. Our Heavenly Father loves us beyond imagining and will always provide for us in accord with what He knows is for our good. On Father's Day, let's be sure to thank our Heavenly Father for His love, and

place all our trust in His providence.