

Restoring Fatherhood

May 22, 2010

It is easy to blame parents today for not knowing how to raise their children. It will be more useful to help all of them wishing to be helped to see where the problem of their estranged children is coming from. The problem is, in a way, as majestic as God, because it comes from the modern world's wholesale refusal and denial of God.

The human family is a small society, consisting basically of father, mother and children. Now common sense tells us that every human society needs a head to be able to function. If no head directs or commands, the society loses its direction and falls apart. A football team needs a captain, a corporation needs a chief executive officer, a country needs a king or president, a town needs a mayor, a fire brigade needs a chief, an army needs a general, a university needs a rector, a court needs a judge, and so on, and so on.

Above all, a family needs a father, because the human family is not only a human society, it is the most basic and natural of human societies, in fact it is the basic model for all other societies. This is because in no other society can the bonds which tie the members together be so deep or natural as the bonds which tie husband to wife and parents to children. Also in no other society is it so clear how the head must both command and care for the members. If a father commands without caring, the family suffers from his harshness. If he cares without commanding – rather more often the case today – it suffers from his softness. Thus family fatherhood is the model for all human authority. That is why (cf. EC 145) the Fourth Commandment to honour father and mother stands at the head of the seven Commandments governing relations in human society.

Now family fatherhood, like all fatherhood or authority, derives from God the Father. St Paul says, "I bow my knees to

the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all fatherhood is named" (Eph. III, 14,15). In other words, says the Word of God, from the fatherhood of God the Father all fatherhood in the human family, all headship in any human society, derives its nature, because the "name," or word, signifies the nature or thing. Then it stands to reason that in any world which kicks out God the Father, as our world is now doing, the name and nature of fatherhood will be drained out of our minds, and all fatherhood and all authority will be emptied out of our lives.

Family fathers, lead your families to God! Put yourselves under him, and your wives and children will put themselves that much more easily under you. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God," says St Paul (I Cor. XI, 3). Give to wife and children the example of a manly piety, as natural as it is "supernatural," and whatever our mad world may get up to for its part, you at least will be doing the best you can for the family that God has entrusted to you.

Specifics for boys will follow in another "Eleison Comments," if God wills.

Kyrie eleison.