What Does Being A Child Before God Consist Of?

What attitudes does childlikeness imply? It seems to me that, basically, there are three attitudes before God: confidence, obedience and childlike surrender.

1. Childlike confidence. God is an almighty Father. This theological affirmation awakens in me the attitude of confidence. It is the experience of the child who knows how to trust blindly in his/her parents. The child does this instinctively, without much thought; it is the child’s own experience; therefore, the child feels secure and sheltered and lives his/her life peacefully and happily.

What is spontaneous in the child, we adults must re-conquer if we want to have the soul of a child. What the child presupposes from his/her natural parents, the childlike person recognizes in the Heavenly Father. Therefore, the father and founder, Fr. Joseph Kentenich, tries to lead us to childlike confidence: “My personal effort, regarding the entire family, is that we become heroes of confidence.”

He tries to illustrate this heroic confidence with the image of the child of the mariner. This child, although aware of the danger of the high seas, does not despair, rather, the child remains tranquil because he/she knows that his/her father is at the helm. This is the conviction we must re-conquer: “The Father has the helm in his hands even if I do not know the destination or the route” (HEAVENWARD, American Edition p. 112). When we thus surrender the direction of our life to the Father God, then existential security is reborn. It is the “security of the pendulum” which remains firmly grasped from above.

Amidst the ups and downs of life, the Father is the solid rock, the child’s tranquility. “The child overcomes everything through confidence” (see GOD MY FATHER), affirms the father and founder.

In this context, spiritual childhood consists in a simple faith in Divine Providence which helps us to see behind everything, a paternal and generous hand. Childlikeness is not evading responsibilities, rather it is an historic and creative leading role. It is sharing responsibilities with the Father, striving for a world worthy of Him.

2. Childlike obedience. Secondly, true childlikeness is docility, submission to the will of God, obedience to the Father. Starting with Jesus and following his footsteps, “the childlike person knows that his work is great only in the measure in which it corresponds to the wish of the Father” (see GOD MY FATHER).

In each case, it is asking Him: Father, what pleases you more? Obedience confers on spiritual childhood vitality and heroism; it makes it demanding and educational because the true image of the Father encompasses not only goodness, but also power. God the Father can cause us pain to make us more like His Only Begotten Son, but it is always love which motivates Him to impose on us severe demands.

3. Childlike love. “The saints – affirms Father Kentenich – became saints from the moment they began to love, and they began to love only when they believed they were loved by God….. when they knew they were loved by God….. and when they felt loved by God” (see GOD MY FATHER).

Our love must again become like the love of children. We should leave aside our troubles and complications of adults and learn to love with simplicity. We should take off our masks of false greatness and self-sufficiency and surrender ourselves with sincere humility. We should go from a rational and calculating love to a spontaneous and warm love. This simplicity, authenticity and spontaneity of surrender, captures the love of the Father and attracts Him irresistibly.

For that reason, our love must grow and become purified. Primitive love turns toward self and one’s own interests. On the other hand, mature childlike love turns toward the Father and His will. That requires permanent self-education. It requires a constant daily struggle, sacrificing and heroic surrenders…..but we know that it is the only road to travel to become like children and thus be able to enter the Kingdom of the Eternal Father.

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