

Incarnate Word Tract Series #6 What Is a Parent?

“That’s a silly question,” you say. “A parent is someone who ‘has children.’” After thinking it over a moment you might expand it to say, “A parent is a person who has and raises children.”

Is that all? The Church, taking her message from the revelation of God in the Bible has always taught that a parent is much more than “someone who owns and raises children.” Lutheran Christians have expressed this universal teaching of the Church in the Lutheran Confessions, in which the Church teaches that:

Parents have the highest authority on earth. Since parents train and govern their children according to God’s will, they are to be regarded as being in god’s stead. All authority on earth “is propagated from the authority of parents.” “All whom we call masters are in the place of parents and must derive their power and authority to govern from them.” Amazing, isn’t it? You parents have more authority than our nation’s President. The Church has not always made this clear, but this is what she has always taught.

Parents deserve the highest honor on earth. Among the seven commandments concerning our neighbor, the first and greatest is: Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother. Parents have a “special distinction above all estates.” And this due honor includes “not only love, but also modesty, humility and deference to a majesty hidden there.” “We are to so act as to show that we esteem them very highly, and that next to God, we regard them as the very highest.”

Alongside the Pastoral Ministry, **Parents have the most important responsibility on earth.** Children are not given to parents for pleasure and amusement. Children are given that parents may train them to serve God and the world.” Those parents who think that their most important task is to gather money and possessions for them, are reminded that God can do that without father or mother. Parents who fail to bring up their children to respect, love and trust God will “have to give an account for it.” “You will bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, thus earning hell by your own children, even though you appear otherwise pious and holy.”

Some Practical Suggestions

1. Doctrine. It is basically the parents’ task to teach their children who God is and what He has done for our salvation. Sunday School, Parochial School and other institutions only help. Every “head of the house” is responsible to God for seeing that his children learn at the least, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Our Father, and their real meaning. They should also learn from their parents to honor and respect the Sacraments.

2. Devotion. “The head of the house” is also responsible to God to see to it that his children not only believe the truth about God, but also worship the Savior. For this

reason every child must be taught how to dedicate himself to God every morning and evening and to pray before and after each meal.

3. Discipline. Although minor mistakes are to be tolerated, children must realize through strict discipline that of all things, sins against God and disrespect for His Word and Sacraments are not to be tolerated. By denying supper to a child who refuses to ask the blessing, the child will be led to see that God is more important than his food.

4. Development of Conscience. Parents must not rely only upon discipline however. The child must be given a godly conscience. Do not be content with merely punishing the child for misuse of God's Name, but train him to call upon God in every trouble, to thank God for everything good that happens, and to place himself in God's protection and grace in all that he says or thinks or does.