

The Influence Of Prayerful Parents

Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

Parents have many thoughts and cares about their children, and what parents do not truly want to see their children become good Christians and useful members of society? But what is the best and most reliable means for raising children to become like this? The means, one can say, is in the hands of the parents themselves - in a good parental example.

One of many proofs of the positive influence of a good parental example is found in the life of the Holy Martyr Julian, whose memory is celebrated by the Church on June 21. He was born of noble parents. His father was a pagan while his mother was a Christian. Upon the death of her husband, Julian's mother, recognizing the importance and holiness of a mother's responsibilities, took her son and went to live in the city Tars, where she lived a quiet and secluded life and dedicated all her energy to the raising of her son.

As a Christian, she knew that prayer is the holy and blessed lantern which both illuminates and shows the true paths through this life. Therefore she did all she could to light this lantern in the heart of her son. A child is influenced much by his mother's heartspoken words and good, kindly and humble direction.

But Julian's mother did not limit herself to just these means; she strived to influence him by her own example as well. As soon as dusk would settle in over the city, daytime noise on the streets would subside, and people would be going to sleep, in the humble dwelling of the pious widow one could always find the gentle flickering light of an oil lamp. With prostrations she prayed and looked upon the icons of Our Saviour and the Mother of God. Her faith and love shone in her face as she whispered the words of prayers, tears fell from her eyes which were filled with faith, and her little son pressed himself warmly against her. His curious gaze moved from the holy icons to the face of his intensely praying mother. His sensitive hearing absorbed the words of his mother's prayers, and his tender heart, already sensing holiness, felt the importance and sweetness of these prayerful minutes.

Several years went by and the little boy Julian grew up, breathing the influence of his pious mother's example, into a good, deeply believing young man. It was then that a great storm broke out over the Christians and they suffered terrible persecution under the cruel emperor Diocletian. Together with many other martyrs, eighteen year old Julian was detained for interrogation and thrown into a dungeon. His persecutors tried to get him to renounce Christ at first by feigning kindness and then by resorting to threats, however in the heart of the young man the fire of faith burned strongly and the lantern of prayer shone brightly.

He felt no fear of the dungeon with its horrors and looked calmly upon his approaching death, as upon a clear blue sky. Finally, his infuriated tormentors tied him up inside a sack, filled it with sand and filth and drowned him in a river. The body of the holy martyr was carried to the shore by waves, found and was buried. Shortly afterwards his pious mother was also martyred.

What remarkable power the good example of his mother had had: the eighteen year old young man, full of life and vigor took so fully into his heart the holy image of Christ and became so filled with holy faith, that at the very crest of his life he pushed away all worldly joys and desired instead to suffer for the name of Christ

rather than renounce Him. He thus died a martyr's death and earned a crown of holiness.

O Christian fathers and mothers! You undoubtedly wish your children to grow up to be good Christians; therefore, take fully into your hearts the example of the mother of Julian and always strive to follow it. She taught her son through the example of her faith and prayer.

Therefore, when there is a feast day, or day of God, be attentive to the occasion, hurry to church for common prayer; stand there devoutly and take into your hearts the prayers and the singing. Let it be that your children who are with you learn from your earnestness in prayer. On a working day, in preparation for your day's work, do not forget to begin the day with prayer; stand before your icons and say your prayers out loud. Have your children also say the prayers which are given them. At the end of your day of labors and cares, when dusk settles in, again do not forget to pray together with your children.

If your faces will glow with the light of faith and prayer to our Lord, this light will be reflected into the young hearts of your children. If your faces will shine with holy and prayerful tenderness, then your children will be filled with it as well. Always remember that they will never forget that family icon corner where they stood joyfully and innocently before the image of our Saviour, beside their beloved parents and repeated their prayers. They will never forget these truly bright and most happy moments of their lives.