

The theme for our morning's meditation is 'The Family-Children.' Whenever we think of the family and particularly bringing up children we know it as a task which is both challenging and exciting. As children grow through the various phases of their lives parents too go through various levels of stress! When a child is a baby we worry about the child's growth, or whether he/she will be alright; when they grow up we worry about their studies; when they are teenagers we worry about their teenage problems; and when they become adults we worry about their marriage and job prospects. How do we as a family enjoy the children whom God has entrusted to us and bring them up in the knowledge and fear of God?

The three texts that were read to us give us some sense of direction in the way we need to bring up our children and relate to them. In the text from Proverbs we see the sage addressing the son about the need to pay attention to the father's instruction. He reminisces about how he had internalized the teaching that was passed onto him. Though he was tender to his father and cherished by his mother he still worked hard and exerted himself to attain this high degree of wisdom. Therefore he now has the authority to pass on the wisdom to the next generation along with his own experiences through which he himself has matured. The key lesson is to get wisdom at any cost. There are numerous words that are used like: 'take hold', 'keep', 'get wisdom', and 'do not forsake', all indicate the need for wisdom. The son is not to forget intentionally or unintentionally all that the father has taught him. Wisdom is again personified as a lady who protects those who take hold of her. She was the one who was going to protect and watch over them. The relationship between the wisdom and the son was to be like a human relationship where there was love for the other. The young son was to embrace wisdom and understanding so that it would be like an ornament on his head, which adorns the wearer and is attractive to others. These instructions are not only for the son but for all children.

In the second reading, Paul admonishes the children to obey their parents. He says, 'Honour your father and mother which is the first commandment with the promise that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'. Paul reminds us that as much as parents take care of children, children are expected to be obedient to their parents. Also if they honour their parents then they will be blessed with long life. In our day and time honouring our parents and taking care of them in their old age has been a difficult issue for many of us. This is an area where the Christian community is to set an example. Paul also reminds the fathers particularly not to exasperate their children but 'instead to bring them up in the training and the instruction of God.' Fathers tend to frustrate their children by irritating them continuously. The father has to take the lead in spiritually instructing and training the children. However, many fathers have failed to take the leadership in this area.

In the gospel reading Jesus rebukes the disciples who were stopping the children to come to him. Jesus tells them, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belong to such as these.' Jesus has a very special place for every child in his heart.

We as parents have been entrusted with the gift of children. We are to take care of this gift and nurture them in God's word and God ways. To do this we need spiritual- ethical wisdom which God alone can give. We need to regularly pray for our children and train them up by leading exemplary lives which they can emulate. May God help us to be faithful stewards towards children who were entrusted to us.