

Faith for Our Adult Sons and Daughters

When we ask God for what our grown children need, (especially the gift of faith), we join ourselves to Jesus, who intercedes at the right hand of the Father. But at the same time, we also stand on the threshold of a spiritual contradiction. On the one hand, Jesus encourages us to go to the Father with all of our needs. On the other hand, he exhorts us to have faith and stop worrying. Perhaps the answer to this puzzle lies in praying *through* our worries, no matter how long it takes to experience relief. Perhaps the answer lies in finding a way to get “unstuck” in prayer, a way to see things from God’s point of view.

Can Be a Messy Proposition

Praying for a grown child's needs can be a messy proposition. It might involve sorting through many emotions. It might even require the support of others, such as counselors or spiritual directors. So turn away from worry, depression, and fear. Turn towards God and take the time to describe your grown child’s or children’s needs as part of your daily prayers. And be sure to include your own feelings about their needs. If you have several grown children, you may want to pray for each of them by name every day, but then spend a little more time praying for just one of them. Then the next day, pray for the next son or daughter. In this way, you will give spiritual attention to each one over the course of a week. And finally, keep in mind that God already knows what each one needs. So you can pray,

“Jesus, remember what I asked for yesterday? I believe that you have already heard my prayer and are working on an answer. You know what is needed. You care about her (or his) troubles. So I give my daughter (or son) to you again. I place my child in your care right now, most holy Savior. Amen.”

Surrender Our Lives

God calls us to surrender our lives and the lives of our grown sons and daughters in prayer. When we do so, we offer God one of the most meaningful sacrifices of all. We lift up our children from the depths of our hearts and place them in God’s heart. We step aside from our feelings and step away from loving them alone. This means letting go of a person who has been an intimate part of our lives physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It means sacrificing not only a son or daughter, but the years spent providing for them. For all of us, prayerful surrender acknowledges God as the ultimate source of all goodness, (faith) and hope. God alone can love them, through us or in spite of us.

Gratitude is another step each parent can take in the presence of God. It does not matter what your grown child is facing or what is happening in your relationship with an offspring. What matters is God’s invitation to look at your child with a thankful heart. So

begin your prayers by slowly breathing in God's Holy Spirit for a few moments. Then lift up your grown child to God by raising your arms to heaven. Thank the Father for every good thing about your child. Start small if you have to: "Thank you for his smile and those blue, blue eyes. Thank you for his affection for his children. Thank you for his gifts. (Thank you for the sacraments he has already received). I even thank you for showing me his pain." Then tell God about all of that son's, or daughter's, needs as well.

Thank God Ahead of Time

Venerable Solanus Casey, OFM Cap (1870-1956), the first American-born male candidate for sainthood, encouraged many to pray in radical gratefulness. He would instruct each person to thank Jesus ahead of time for God's response, "leaving everything at His divine disposal, [up to and] including all [the details] . . . of our death."

When we thank God, we move from problem-centered petitions to God-centered worship. We imitate the psalms of lament that move from tribulations to seeking God's

point of view and voicing hope. A good example is Psalm 22, which Jesus prayed on the cross. Let us imitate the psalmist and Jesus and move toward thanksgiving for our grown children. Let us move toward God's heart.

"As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: 'Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the

will of God in Christ Jesus for you' (1 Thessalonians 5:8); 'Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving' (Colossians 4:12)." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2638)

Personal Reflection or Small Group Sharing Questions (25-30 mins)

1. What is your understanding of intercessory prayer? What has been your experience of praying for your grown children? In what ways has praying for them influenced your life or theirs?
2. What do you remember of your child/children's baptism? What did this event mean to you and to your family at that time? What meaning does it have for you now?

3. How could you grow in respect for this grown child as an adult? What comes to mind when you hear about letting go and surrendering this son or daughter to God?

Prayer Skill (5-10 mins.)

Choose a photo of one grown child and sit quietly. Choosing only one son or daughter will help you focus on God's particular and unique love for that child. If you do not have a photo, use one of that child's belongings or a gift that they gave you.

Opening Prayer: Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible . . . all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

Lord Jesus, my Savior and brother, when I look at this photo, I am _____.

(If you don't know what to say, simply tell God your feelings, sing a hymn, or just repeat the name of Jesus while looking at the photo.)

Holy Father, I believe that you love my child, _____ (name). I choose your blessings for her/him now. And I ask your forgiveness for my sins against _____ (name).

(Trace the Sign of the Cross over the photo, then lift the photo up as a way of offering your child to God)

Thank you for giving me _____ (name).

Ending Prayer: Father in heaven, you made each of us in the likeness of your Son, and you sent your Spirit to restore us in his image. Touch the heart of my loved one with your merciful love. Use me as a source of blessing, forgiveness, and peace. Send me, or someone of your choosing, as a witness of your good news and joy for my son/daughter. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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