

The Discipline of the Lord (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13—The Discipline of the Lord

⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?—

“My son, *do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him.*

⁶ *For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. *God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?...¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13)

1. Discipline: the “discipline” (Greek *paideia*) of the Lord (12:5)

a. Punishment

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,

but *the rod of discipline* (Greek *paideia*) drives it far from him. (Prov 22:15)

b. Education

When I came to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes and stayed for some time, I found opportunity for *no little instruction* (Greek *paideia*). (Sirach, Prologue)

2. Proverbs: “the Lord disciplines him whom he *loves*” (12:6, cf. Prov 3:11-12)

3. Righteousness: discipline → “righteousness” (12:11)

4. Encouragement: “lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees” (12:12)

Living Tradition

Pope Francis: A good father *knows how to wait and knows how to forgive* from the depths of his heart. Certainly, he also knows how to correct with firmness: he is not a weak father, submissive and sentimental. *The father who knows how to correct without humiliating is the one who knows how to protect without sparing himself.* Once I heard a father at a meeting on marriage say: “Sometimes I have to strike the children lightly... but never in the face so as not to humiliate them”. *How beautiful! He has a sense of dignity. He must punish, but he does it in a just way, and moves on.* (Pope Francis, General Audience, 4 February, 2015)

Catechism: Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well

suites for *education in the virtues*... By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them: “*He who loves his son will not spare the rod... He who disciplines his son will profit by him*” (Sir 30:1-2) Fathers, *do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Eph 6:4) (CCC 2223)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. What does the letter to the Hebrews mean when it refers to the “discipline of the Lord”? What is the context of the passage in Proverbs 3:11-12 that it is quoting?

For Further Reading

1. Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey. *Hebrews*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005.
2. St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews*. Translated by F. R. Larcher, O.P. Lander, Wyo.: Aquinas Institute, 2012.
3. Mary Healy, *Hebrews*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic, 2016.