**The Love of God in Ordinary Time**

**(Column 121: June 17, 2024)**

By Lucia A. Silecchia

Recently, I spent a couple days on an annual getaway to a popular family theme park. Yes, there were long lines, hot weather, overpriced snacks and crowded hotels. Yet, in the happy exhausting chaos, I caught a glimpse of the love of God.

The park was filled with parents of young children. It did not take long to see that in the imperfect ways parents showed their love for their children, they were leading them – and those around them – to understand more fully the perfect love of God.

I saw a mother slowly and repeatedly explaining to her anxious young son that the train ride they were about to enjoy was not a roller coaster. She reassured him that it would stay firmly on the ground and move slowly along the tracks without speeding up, flipping upside down or plunging down an unexpected hill. In her kind assurance were echoes of a heavenly Father who reassures His children, “Be not afraid.”

I saw, multiple times, exhausted children in the arms of their mothers, fathers and grandparents. These toddlers were out of strength and rested in the strong arms of those who loved them and offered a safe place of rest. As they rested, they shared a bit of that comfort that comes, ever more so, from a loving God who promises that those who come to Him weary and burdened will find rest.

I saw a father bring his family a few bottles of cold water as they waited on a hot line for their turn on a ride, and a mother retrieve a supply of snacks from her overstuffed backpack. This was not the miracle of loaves and fishes, to be sure. Yet, as these children were strengthened by the ways their parents met their physical needs, they may also have grown in confidence that God, too, will give them their daily bread.

I saw another father kneel down to make an earnest plea to his son and daughter to stop squabbling over a crisis that embroiled them in a loud, contentious feud. They may not have appreciated his intervention. Yet, perhaps as they grow, they will come to understand the God who desires that His sons and daughters dwell in peace and unity.

As the day wore on, I saw more than one child implode in those infamous meltdowns that come when fatigue, hunger, impatience and heat bring out the very worst in toddlers (and, to be fair, in all of us.) When that happened, the loud whining clearly exasperated annoyed bystanders. Yet, in the calming embrace of a loving parent who dried tears and spoke kind words was a reminder that even in the moments when we may seem to be the least lovable, there is a God who draws us to His embrace.

As summer begins, the time that parents and children spend together on vacations, around the kitchen table, on a back porch and in local parks is precious, priceless time. It is, for some, the stuff from which happy memories are made. For some, it is an exhausting, stressful interlude before school begins again. For some, it is a restful time to be refreshed and renewed before routines begin again. For some, it is an over-scheduled intense season of activity. For some, it is a little bit of everything.

Yet, one thing is true of any time parents have with children. It is in these times that parents have the chance to show their children the depth of human love that may help them begin to understand the perfect depth of divine love. Sadly, it can also be a time when lack of such love may make it harder for children to understand and believe in a God that loves them.

In whatever way summer unfolds for parents and children this summer, I hope that for all it is a chance for parents to share the precious gift of love with their children – the love that can point them to the love of God. I was blessed to see this gift so freely shared on a couple of happy, hot June days in a park. To those parents whose patient love was noticed and appreciated, may God bless you. Thank you for showing your children – and me -- a glimpse of the love of God.

And thanks, Mom and Dad, for all the ways you loved me in this life. May you share the fullness of God’s love in eternal life.

*Lucia A. Silecchia is Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Faculty Research at the Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law. “On Ordinary Times” is a biweekly column reflecting on the ways to find the sacred in the simple. Email her at* [*silecchia@cua.edu*](mailto:silecchia@cua.edu)*.*