**The Advantage of Spiritual Maturity**

Based on [John 16:5-15](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn16.5)

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Fifth Sunday of Easter ~ Cantate

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And a Blessed Mothers’ Day to all the mothers in the world who have faithfully taken up this holy calling and estate. Before there were governments and health agencies and ministries presuming to tell us how far apart to stand from one another and how often to wash our hands, there were mothers. In the beginning God created them male and female, husband and wife, fathers ***and mothers***...adults and children.

Mothers are guardians of their children, chosen by the God and Father of all to nurse, change diapers, love and nurture their children and to raise them in the way they should go. This is so that someday, they can and must let go of their children, and trust them to manage their own lives. Mothers will always be mothers, but only for a short while are they guardians.

In raising children, parents are called guardians. They are to guard their children while they grow and learn. Some parents have a tough time when their kids move out; some resist, because they want to continue to guard and protect them. But ***that is not to their advantage***. It is to an person’s ***advantage*** to be treated like an adult...and that means giving them the opportunity to thrive on their own using what you have equipped them with to manage their own lives.

Jesus called his disciples to follow him, and they did so for three years. He taught them many things, but now, on the night of His betrayal, Jesus says to his disciples, “But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. **Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: *it is to your advantage that I go away*, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you**. But if I go, I will send him to you.” Like children who have the security of being guarded by their parents; the disciples always had Jesus to guard them. They had him to go to, to tell them what to do and what not to do. From the time he called them to drop their nets and follow him, he was their guardian. But now his earthly ministry and guardianship is nearly complete. Now that he has taught them all things ***it is to their advantage*** that he go away to the Father, and let them manage their own lives. They have reached adulthood, meaning here that they are ready to receive and make use of the Holy Spirit. So he will send the Spirit to them who will come to guide them in all truth.

These disciples, and indeed all christians who have inherited the teachings of Christ, are prepared for spiritual maturity. They are heirs of righteousness, salvation, and spiritual freedom.

St. Paul writes to the Jews who had converted to Christ,

“4 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is ***under guardians and managers*** until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

***It is advantageous*** for a child to someday reach the maturity of adulthood. We always love our mothers, but ***it is advantageous*** that a grown up man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. ***It is advantageous*** that those who were once under the law, obeying God out of fear of punishment, now obey God in the freedom of the spirit. And believe it or not ***it is advantageous*** that we do not have Jesus to go to right now. It is ***advantageous*** that we are left with His teaching, his church, his kingdom, yes his Holy Spirit in our hearts, so that we may obey God’s commandments with a mature mind and a willing spirit.

Many parents have children who are ready for adulthood, but the parents won’t let them go. With good intentions they continue to do their laundry, buy their food, pay their rent, monitor and pad their debit accounts...and in some cases that might be warranted. But ultimately there comes a time where a child must be expected to be mature. He must be given the freedom to sink or swim on his own judgment, learn from his own experience, pay his own dues, overcome his own struggles, make and keep his own commitments. This is exactly what it means to say that christians must be treated as spiritual adults. This is what christ wants for us. It is to our advantage.

Contrast that with the church of the Pope, the papacy, which for a long time--(and they haven’t ever said they were wrong on this)--for a long time taught that it was sinful to give the bible to lay christians, to allow them to read and interpret it. Men who translated the scriptures into common languages for all to read were burned at the stake. The idea was that adult christians actually remained spiritual infants, dependants who needed the guardianship and mediation of popes, and priests, and councils to take care of them. These spiritual fathers were even allowed to give indulgences and forgive or retain transgressions based on their own judgments, wisdom, and assigned penances. “I have heard your confession My son, Say ten our fathers and five hail marys and then you may go to the sacrament.” “Okay, Thank you Father!...?” Who called these men to replace the wisdom of christ with their own ideas and counsels?

But Christ says to christians, “9 call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. 10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.” Paul says, “stand firm, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” Far from assigning new guardians, Jesus says it is to the christian’s advantage that they be treated as though they are mature and have the Holy Spirit, because he will send Him. And they can use Him or resist Him, but that is their freedom. Let them use prayers and ceremonies as they will. Let them give alms and fast according to their own judgment. Let them seek out advice and teaching as their heavenly Father has made available to them. Let them use the means of Grace and the sacrament in freedom, according to their own judgment, not under compulsion of rules and regulations, but because they can and should be trusted to access the resources of christ as they need them.

Some churches treat their members as children. It is just as true that some christians would rather remain children. They want to be given rules from priests and popes. They want to be told what to believe rather than have to search the scriptures themselves. They want to live in their parent’s basement the rest of their lives, and have mom cook their meals. And maybe they are not ready for freedom. But if a man does not work, let him not eat. Christ did not establish his church on earth so christians can ignore the gift of the spirit unless they are forced to. Christians should not be treated like children forced to stay at the table until they eat all their vegetables. Christians are expected to use the Spirit in willingness and maturity.

The church is not your guardian, it is your gift...your resource for spiritual food. The pastor is not your parent, he is your friend, fellow christian and coheir of the kingdom who has been called to minister to your spiritual needs as you have spiritual needs...and you do. But you must manage your own works; you are responsible for your own spiritual growth, your have not been given new spiritual parents to replace christ, you have been given the Holy Spirit who will guide you in all truth.

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.