

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

What we just heard, I believe, are the most life-giving words in the whole Bible: “You are my beloved Son! With you I am well pleased!” Would to God that every child on the earth could hear without equivocation from his or her mother and father: “You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love! With you I am well pleased!”

What a difference it would make in the world if every parent would affirm his and her child like that. I believe we would see much less crime; far less delinquency; and, quite possibly, the end of terrorists.

Can you imagine a world in which every child knew for certain that he or she was loved? Can you imagine a world where no young person felt the need to act out in destructive ways in order to gain parental attention or approval? I believe this is THE solution to most of the world’s deepest and most tragic problems—the emptiness, loneliness, and despair of feeling unloved and unlovable that drives people to desperate behaviors and actions.

“You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love! With you I am well pleased!”

Baseball great, Cal Ripken, Jr., shared his experience of parental love: “Growing up, ‘I love you’ wasn’t spread around too much in our household,” Ripken said. “Not that it wasn’t meant. I could tell...my Dad and Mother told me...they loved me, without saying it. It’s just the way things were then.”

“That part is different in my family. I want my kids to hear it. I tell them, ‘I love you no matter what,’ which means, ‘Whether you’re good or bad, happy or sad. It doesn’t matter whatever you are. I love you. Unconditionally! Always! I love you!’” It all goes back to security and telling them you’ll always be there for them.”

Then Ripken adds, “Maybe you run the risk of telling them you love them so often that it loses meaning. I’ll risk it!”

I would add, “It’s the safest bet in the world!” Tell your children often, every day when they go out, every evening when they come home, every morning when they get up, and every night as they go to bed, tell them, “You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love! With you I am well pleased!”

It makes a difference. What a difference it made in the life of Jesus. This son of a carpenter comes out of the desert, humbles himself to be baptized in a baptism of repentance, though he had never sinned and God speaks to him from the heavens, "You are my son, whom I love! With you I am well pleased." He is then warmly embraced in the Spirit of that love which is so overwhelming that he spends the rest of his life doing good for others and healing all those oppressed by the devil. The power of the Spirit of the Father's love for him is so great that it motivates him to sacrifice his own life for the sake of us all. By the very shedding of his own blood for us, who are baptized in His Name, we too become sons and daughters of God, His Father and ours, and are empowered by that same Spirit of Love. Parents, you especially, as the truest image and likeness of God must embrace your children in that Spirit of Love.

Forgive me please, but the pundits and the politicians have it all wrong. They would have us be afraid. They want to put armed guards in our schools; have us arm ourselves to the teeth; bomb wherever terrorists might lurk, even if it means killing innocent people.

No! The way out of the morass that our sorry world is in is for every father and every mother to tell every child they have, "You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love! With you I am well pleased!" Then, and only then, "The Lord will bless His people with peace!"