

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



## IS MY DADDY IN HEAVEN?

Recently at a Papal audience at Holy Cross Parish in Rome, the Holy Father Pope Francis fielded some questions from the children. This is usually part of the Pope's schedule when he visits a parish. Well, this young boy by the name of Emanuele came up to the microphone to ask the Pope a question. However, the child "froze" when he got up to the mike.

One of the Monsignors who was present tried to help the boy. However, he started crying and said, "I can't." It was then that Pope Francis interceded. The Holy Father said, "Come, come to me, Emanuele." He encouraged him to whisper his question in his ear. The Pope gave the boy an embrace and spoke softly to him. Pope Francis said, "If only we could all cry like Emanuele when we have an ache in our hearts!"

As it turned out, Emanuele's father who was an atheist had died and the little boy asked the Pope if his daddy was in heaven. Apparently the father was a very good man because even though an unbeliever, he had his four children baptized into the Catholic faith.

The Pope then told the child that God does not abandon anyone. It took more courage he said for an atheist to have his kids baptized than for a believer to do that. Pope Francis consoled the little boy by urging him to pray for his father and reminding everyone that "God has a dad's heart!" Isn't that the truth? After all, we call God "Our Father."

Certainly the Pope showed in this incident the compassion of Christ. When I saw his meeting with the boy on television it was very moving. We have to remember that all judgement is in the hands of God. It is God who determines who is in heaven and who is not.

Many years ago, a great book was assigned for us as juniors at Monsignor Farrell High School. The book was entitled *The Keys of the Kingdom* by A. J. Cronin. It was later made into a movie starring Gregory Peck.

In the book, Father Francis Chisholm, a heroic Scottish priest, is sent to China as a missionary. When a plague strikes his parish, his friend, an atheist, Doctor Tulloch comes to help him out. The doctor, in his efforts to aid the sick, contracts the plague himself and dies unrepentant.

Later on, Father Chisholm was criticized by a nun for not granting his friend absolution. Father Chisholm answers this way: "How do you define a Christian? One who goes to church one day of the seven and then lies, slanders, cheats his fellow men the other six? God judges us not only by what we believe...but by what we do." I think that the Pope would concur with those words of Father Chisholm.

Now, I am not endorsing atheism by any means! However, it is true to say that at times the way some "religious people" act might cause some people to go in that direction! A good Catholic should be one who not only talks a good show but also is a "good show" in the sense that their faith issues forth in actions. The proof inevitably of our love for God is in what we do. A good example speaks much more powerfully than any words.

Let us pray to Our Father who is in heaven to imitate the kindness, love and compassion of His Son Jesus Christ!

Sincerely in the Lord,  
Father Jerome