

The Question of the Week

‘I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.’

John 14: 17

“I will not leave you orphans.” That is what Jesus said. And yet, there are times in our lives when that is precisely how we feel. It is not only when we suffer the loss of one of our parents at the moment of their death. That is a real experience of being orphaned no matter how old we are. No, I think what Jesus is referring to is something else instead. It is not when we lose our last parent. It is when we feel like we have lost Him.

And that is a common enough experience. People tell me that with some frequency and regularity. “You know, Father, I just have lost all sense of God. I cannot feel the Lord’s presence any more. I don’t know what is happening to me. I don’t know where I went wrong but I used to be able to feel the Lord close to me but now I seem to have lost all that. And I don’t really know what I’ve done wrong.”

Often enough it is not the result of our having done something wrong or something we failed to do. There are times when the Lord veils his presence from us. He is still right there, still so very close but we are not able to feel that. Why would the Lord do that? Because he is preparing us for something else, something more.

We are all familiar with the concept of weaning a child. From breast feeding to bottle feeding. From sucking my thumb to not sucking my thumb. From going everywhere with my blanket to having to leave my blanket home when I go to school. Weaning is commonplace. It is a very early Rite of Passage. Painful. Irrksome. Emotional. But necessary as we begin to assume more of our own personal responsibilities.

Well the Lord weans us of things in the spiritual life too. He removes some of the familiarity and the sense of closeness that we rely on. Why? Because as good as it was it is now holding us back. And therefore it has to go. We don’t like it. The Lord will allow us to feel his presence again but we have to trust him. And that is the key point. Without feeling the particular emotions I have come to rely on my whole life, can I still believe He is not abandoning me, not leaving me orphaned? That my friends is the question of the week.