

Because I Said So!

by Deacon Bill Stimpson
stimpson.jr@sbcglobal.net

Not to rain on any new parents parade, but I believe that the first words ever spoken *purposely* by a young child is the word, “NO!” I would not be surprised if there aren’t hundreds of studies and theories as to the reasons for this insistent and defiant “NO!” After the “terrible two’s” and the conditioned “No!” most often is the stage of the interminable “Why?” The why can be a simple matter of curiosity; “Why does it Rain?” Or a more defiant “Why do I have to...?” It seems perfectly obvious to me that these stages in our development signifies the emergence of understanding of self as an individual. Equally obvious to me is that these stages are a necessary part of human development toward adulthood. It also impresses me about the cycle of “parent’s knowledge” as seen through the eyes of a child/teenager/young adult. Up until the time the child begins school (public or parochial) mom and dad *know everything!* From the time of kindergarten on, until the onset of puberty, the volume of parental knowledge diminishes to absolute zero. During the teen years, parental insight and knowledge often resides below zero to the point of oppressive obstructionism. As the child emerges from the teen years and enters adulthood, mom and dad begin to regain their lost knowledge. By the time our children begin to have children of their own, we have grown from completely clueless to not quite so dumb after all. And the cycle goes on.

Another dynamic in the arena of familial communications is the seemingly continuous questioning of “Why?” The “Why” most often has a modifier as to; what where or when. Superior to our mortal ability to discuss and explain the logic of our why, is the ability of the child to argue, ignore and challenge. (Remember that at this time we parents have an accumulative IQ less than a box of rocks.) Ultimately we fall back on the one argument that can’t be countered because we are bigger and have more power – **“Because I said so! That’s why!”** This works for a while, but as the child matures (i.e. learns the ropes and how to manipulate the system) our superior power is eroded as well. Ultimately we are faced with the reality that we no longer have any power over our children beyond the bonds of love and influence. At this time, “Because I said so!” has no effective power. Our children are our equals in standing. If we are willing to accept them as equals they most often reciprocate. Fortunately, they are also more willing and open to hear the logic behind our beliefs and insights. We are no longer the mindless autocrats, parents set out to ruin their lives, as in their teen years. We have become people again.

Throughout the history of the church, there have been hundreds of attempts to challenge the teachings of the Church on any and every point. Some attacks have been more serious than others, and some even with cause, but always challenging the power and authority of the Church. It might suffice for some to accept without question, the teaching of the Church, but we should understand that the Church has a foundation for its teachings and a more solid foundation than “Because I said so!” If we ever have a question about what the Church teaches, I believe that we would be far better off to read and study the “why” behind the teaching to more fully appreciate the actual “what” of the teaching. In doing so, I am confident that any conflict can be resolved. Heresy begins with the narcissistic position of **“Because I said so!”**

If we as Catholic Christians would continue to explore the logic and validity of Catholic teachings on matters of faith and morals I am convinced that our children are more apt to listen to accept our faith, as their own, when they are convinced that it is deeper than just what we were told by our parents, or some *old* priest or nun. If we have a reason for what we believe and are willing to discuss, as an equal - adult-to-adult, then we have more to stand on than just our “parental authority.” I think that people would listen more closely to our concerns about promiscuity, substance abuse, the sacredness of marriage and the right to life.