

To be a Parent

Today is my birthday. And of all my modest human dimensions, the one that makes me the most complete is to be a parent.

To be a parent, is above all, not to expect rewards. But to be happy when, and if, they come. It is to know how to do the necessary above and beyond incomprehension. It is to learn tolerance with others, and to exercise hard intolerance (but understanding) with one's own mistakes.

To be a parent is to learn, missing, the time to talk and to silence. It is to become satisfied on being at the bench, coadjutant, then left behind. But still, never speaking on the precise moment. It is to have the courage to move ahead, both towards life and death. It is to live the weaknesses, which later on we will correct on the child, turning oneself stronger because of the child and of everything one will have to go through in order to understand and to face.

To be a parent, is to learn how to be challenged even when at the apogee of lucidity. It is to wait. To know that experience only adds to those who already have it, and the only way to acquire it is through living. It is therefore to endure the pain of seeing the children going through necessary sufferings, trying to protect them without them noticing, so they may be able to discover their own pathways.

To be a parent is: to know and to silence; to make and to save; to say and not to insist; to speak and to say; to dose and to control it. Guiding without proving by reason. It is to see pain, suffering, addiction, fall and ambush, never transferring to the children what, corrodes soul. To be a parent is to be good without being weak. It is never transferring to the children the share of its shortcomings, its forsaken, orphan and weak side.

To be a parent is to learn how to be surpassed, even struggling to renovate. It is to comprehend without showing; it is to wait for the harvest time, even if it doesn't come in this lifetime. To be a parent is to learn how to suffocate the need of affection and understanding. But to shed tears when they come.

To be a parent is to know how to fade itself away once one's personality becomes clearer on the child, always as an influence, never as an imposition. It is to know how to be a childhood hero, an example of youthfulness, and a friend in the child's adulthood. It is to know how to play and how to miff. It is to form without modeling, to help without demanding, to teach without demonstrating, to suffer without contaminating, and to love without receiving.

To be a parent, is to receive anger, misunderstanding, opposition, mental retardation, envy, projection of negative feelings, temporary hatred, revolt, disappointment and respond to everything with the capacity to continue without offending, to insist without mediation, certainty, haven, balance, strength, bridge, hand that opens the cage, love that does not imprison, basis, enigma, pacification.

To be a parent is to reach the utmost of affliction in the maximum of silence. The utmost of the companionship in the maximum of loneliness. It is, after all, to collect the victory exactly when realizing that the child, to whom one has helped, growing, does not need her or himself any longer to live. It is the one who annihilated oneself during the accomplished work, and still smiles, calmly, for doing everything in order to stop being important.

Artur da Tavola.

Translated by Flavio Zanetti