

THE INVISIBLE ARMS

Bill was a meticulous potter. His craftsmanship with clay was reputed well beyond his immediate neighbourhood.

The pots that were moulded by him were of very high quality, giving the meals cooked in them a special aroma. While stored food remained fresh for several days, the plants that were sown in Bill's clay pots grew healthier and more beautiful.

Aware of the miraculous properties, most people would insist on buying pottery that was shaped by Bill alone.

When asked what made his pots so distinctively special, Bill would shrug off saying there was no secret at all. All he did was to remember God and pray for His blessings before commencing work on any piece, whether a pot, vase or cup. Bill said God was his helper in all his work.

A typical day of the potter would start early in the morning, when most others were still in bed. Bill would laugh and say he preferred to have a headstart on his day as God would have more time to help him, before the others woke up and vied to seek His attention and grace.

Bill had a five-year-old son who had been taught to start the morning and end the day with a prayer. The child was also inculcated with the habit of seeking the grace of God before beginning any work for it to progress smoothly and efficiently.

One day, the boy woke up earlier than usual. Bill was already at work when his son appeared at the doorstep of his workshop - sleepy, barefoot, and dressed in a white, long nightshirt.

The father noticed the early guest and said with a smile on his face: “Good morning, son! Have you already said good morning to God?”

Rubbing one eye and in a drowsy voice, the boy replied, “Not yet.”

He then asked, “Why should I do this every single morning and evening and why do I need to pray to God for help before I do anything?”

Bill went on to finish working on his pot before he said in a calm voice, “Come to me! I will show you why this needs to be done.”

The boy ran to his father and crept into his lap.

The father took a piece of clay and put it on the wheel.



“My son, do you see this piece of clay?”

“Yes,” said the child.

“Clay is energy; it is the life that God gives to each one of us. At the time we are born, every person is given a piece of clay and everyone decides on one's own what he or she will create out of this piece of clay.



One may choose to make his or her life into a nice graceful vase, while someone else would prefer to mould it into a wine jug or an ash tray. There are so many possibilities to make something out of a simple piece of clay! What would you make, my son?”

The boy excitedly answered, “I would make a nice vase!”

“Aha! So, take this piece and create a vase,” said Bill.

The boy stretched out his right leg to touch the lower wheel to set the throw rotating. He could hardly

reach it and pushed with all his force. The wheel was heavy and rotated very slowly. The boy immersed his hands into the water placed next to the wheel and put his little hands on the piece of clay.

He tried to follow the same process that his father would. But the wheel turned too slowly and the clay squeezed through the boy's fingers and a vase that the boy intended to make remained unmade. The child tried once, twice, thrice... a fourth time and then once more; but after this desperation overwhelmed him. Frustrated, the boy cowered in his father's lap and started to cry.

He whimpered, “Nothing turns out of what I do. I cannot make a vase out of my piece of clay! I am so unfortunate.”

The father fondled the boy's head and comforted him: “Don't be upset, my dear! I can help you, if you like.”

The child perked up and eagerly said, “Yes, daddy, please help me. I want to make a vase!”

The boy's father put his feet on the lower wheel and pushed it to rotate. Taking into his arms the little hands of his son, he immersed them into water and put the piece of clay that was rotating on the throwing-wheel. The father held his son's arms, guided his fingers and hands in such a way that

the piece of clay slowly began taking the shape of a vase. The throwing-wheel kept rotating fast enough and eventually a small, but proportional vase was born.

Both the father and son working together made a pretty picture. While the child was working his hands around the wheel, the father steadily and surely led him through the process.

When the work was complete, the boy proudly held the vase in his hand that he had intended to make. Now, he embraced his father and said: “Thank you, dad! Thank you! I am so delighted!”

Watching his son indulgently, Bill asked, “Did you understand, my son, why I teach you to pray for God’s help every morning and to thank Him every evening?”

The boy looked thoughtfully into his father’s eyes. Bill then continued, **“God is our father and mother. When you pray for His help, He always will support you. He will turn your wheel of life faster or slower depending on what is needed and help you overcome all impediments. He will hold your hand and lead you through all your work, enabling you to achieve what you wish and be happy. He will help you make what you wish to make out of your life.”**

Bill now paused and then added, “I wish that the pottery I make brings people pleasure, health, well-being and peace. That is why I always think of God before I start work and pray for His help. I know that when I do that, God puts His invisible arms on my hands and leads the process of creating in the same way as I did today, when I helped you make that vase.”

The boy quietly embraced his father again, and then as if in a hurry, he crept out of the father's lap and stepped towards the door.

Suddenly, he turned back and said, “Thank you, daddy, but I still have something to do. I need to go and talk to God.”

After the child left, Bill smiled to himself knowing that the invisible arms of God will safeguard and lead his son too, and help him shape his piece of clay – his life – into a nice and graceful vase.

- By Rita Ivanova, Latvia

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