

Dear Parents

Here's a quote from a letter; the letter is from a prominent engineering firm to a government agency: "Following our verbal discussion regarding the delivery of equipment of simple construction for the burning of biological waste, we now submit our plans for the ovens which are fired by coal and hitherto given satisfaction." Seems like a typical business letter; and it was. Unfortunately, it's from the era of Nazi rule in Germany. It is a tender to supply gas ovens in which to incinerate the bodies of Jews and other victims, who were herded into death camps – "biological waste"!

It would seem that those who were involved in this "business transaction", had completely lost touch with their humanity and readily sacrificed all sensitivity and emotion for the sake of their ambition: profit! If we were to cast a critical eye across our own society, no doubt we could rest our gaze on practices that are quite insensitive to the wellbeing of our contemporary human beings.

Insensitivity can occur as we strive daily to fulfil our role as parents while, at the same time, attend to our own personal needs and growth and to those of our partner. It's not always easy to attend to our children's needs for nurture and attention when they are asking for it. On the other hand, when we have the time, we could be over-stimulating or being intrusive with our children's life, and continue to be, even when our children are providing clues that they wish to end the interaction with us and be left alone.

At any point in our parenting role, we can only do our best according to our particular circumstance. As we try to establish a nurturing and predictable environment, we should resist feelings of disappointment when we encounter tendencies within our children that we cannot change. Perhaps these "tendencies" are what make our

children uniquely themselves and what they need from us is the emotional scaffolding to help them explore life as it unfolds for them. Children are looking to us for empathetic support, which compels us to act compassionately when reasoning alone might not.

We are the emotional coach for our children and, as such, need to help them to understand all those emotions that they are feeling as they arrive at new developmental stages of their journey to adulthood. Sensitive interactions that are well timed and in tune with our children's emotional needs, don't have to be a daily occurrence but, when they do occur, their effect will be most positive. If we are sensitive and compassionate towards our children, this example will help and encourage them to learn about and respect the feelings of others.

As Christians, we have Jesus as our leader, a person whose dealings with the people in His life were always sensitive, empathetic and compassionate. God's love is present in all of us and, if we can acknowledge God within us, we can experience being loved from within; this truly enables us to love others: to be sensitive, empathetic and compassionate, for we do so as persons set free by God's love for us.

God, our Father,

As we tackle each day's routine and face its demands and emergencies, please be with us.

Fill us with Your love, give us a sense of Your presence within us, as we give nurture and support to our children. Amen.

Peace and Best Wishes.