***The Motivation of Love - the Manipulation of Guilt***

One Thanksgiving when my wife, and our youngest daughter and I lived in Illinois we were thrilled as our two older children came to spend Thanksgiving with us. As our three children were visiting after dinner they began talking about their formative years in school and the number of times they were "encouraged" to engage in activities that had a potential for them getting into trouble. While compared to the kinds of troubles of our day these were minor, nonetheless, they were real temptations. The rationale of these "friends" was, "If Father Ackerman's kids do it, then we might not be in as much trouble — 'Why are you upset with me? Even Fr. Ackerman's kids did it.'"

 In the end our children did not succumb to the temptations which may even have led to greater peer approval! The reason our three children gave was, "We were not afraid of Dad's anger — we simply couldn't bear to break his heart." That was one of the happiest moments in my life, and to this day may well be a defining principle in our relationships. "Perfect love casts out fear."

 There are those who don't fear God enough — at least in terms of His judgment. But there are also those who are motivated by their fear of God rather than their love of God. Once God has been as clear as He has been in His Holy Word — and once we have accepted what Jesus tells us, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father," then we can look into the eyes of Jesus as we are drawn into temptation, and realize that we have the potential to break His heart.

 If a person were to say to me, "You make me feel guilty," I would have a few questions to ask.

1. Is what I have said consistent with what both the Bible and the Church teaches?

2. Do I really have so much power to make someone feel a certain way or do they have a choice as to how they will feel?

The second question is a difficult one, because in a love and trust relationship people may use mechanisms to attempt to manipulate someone. Moreover, injuries of one's past may well condition the ways in which they respond. A healthy way of responding when we decide to feel guilty is — "Am I feeling this way because I know what God wants of me and I won't or can't do it?" That means that we must deal directly with the One who has revealed His Will for us, rather than someone who is simply reminding us of what God has determined is His Will for us. I do not really care if people forget what I say, but pray that they will remember forever what God says.

 Conflict can occur when expectations are not articulated, but God has made His Will for us known, and in the end, the conflict may well be within ourselves. Do I follow God or my peers, or the ever-changing mores and morals of the culture?

**"We simply couldn't bear to break our Father's heart."**

**What a statement of love!**