

What Makes the Kids All Right

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On September 17 we remember Saint Sophia and her martyred daughters Faith, Hope and Charity. They lived in Rome, and spoke openly about their Christian faith even in a time of severe persecutions.

The four family members were arrested and ordered to worship the goddess Artemis, but refused. Sophia, a widow, encouraged the girls (not yet in their teens) to stay strong and face whatever might come. The girls were tortured and killed. Sophia, in pain from torture, was allowed to bury their broken bodies. She prayed over the graves in deepest grief, then died, anticipating a reunion with her daughters in God's Kingdom.

Sophia had taught her family not to be afraid of proclaiming the faith. Their willingness to die rather than renounce Jesus Christ surely encouraged fellow believers to do the same. Their life and death were a reaching out to others.

In the recent movie "The Kids Are All Right" there is no reaching out; everything is turned inward. The story is of a lesbian couple, Nic and Jules, who have two teenage children, a boy and a girl, both by the same sperm donor.

When Nic questions the boy, Laser, about a friend she doesn't like, her words show that she is raising the son to look at everything in terms of personal benefit. She asks him what he "gets" from the friendship. She tells Laser that the friend is undesirable because he seems "untended." It doesn't occur to her that she and her family might reach out to him, and have a part in "tending" him..

Laser and his sister Joni secretly meet their biological father, Paul. They develop a relationship with him, and finally bring him home to meet Nic and Jules. It seems that Paul may belatedly have a place in their lives, but this possibility is ruined by his immoral behavior. Nic, who is terrified of losing her primary place in the children's lives as they get closer to Paul, seizes the chance to banish him from their lives. She angrily calls him an "interloper" as she slams the door of the family's house in his face, telling him never to come back.

To Nic, Paul is an interloper because he threatens her desire to shut the world out and enclose her family safely behind that door she slams on him. But he is also Joni and Laser's father, and she will never really be able to shut that fact out.

Saint Sophia didn't try to shut the world out. She taught her family members to face the world, and to be concerned for others' salvation as well as their own. She urged them not to fear suffering for Christ. That is the only way to raise truly Christian children: by reading them to put Christ first, not by trying to shut the world out or, certainly, by trying to deny biological truth. That is also the only way it's possible to feel that the kids really are all right.

Troparion - Tone 4

The Church celebrates and rejoices
In the feast of the three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love
And their Mother Sophia, named for her wisdom:
For in them she gave birth to the three godly virtues.
Now they eternally behold their bridegroom, God the Word.
Let us rejoice spiritually in their memory and cry:
O our three Heavenly Protectors,
Establish, confirm and strengthen us
In Faith, Hope and Love.
Kontakion - Tone 1
The holy branches of noble Sophia,
Faith, Hope, and Love,
confounded Greek sophistry through Grace.
They struggled and won the victory
and have been granted an incorruptible crown by Christ the Master of all