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## *Only a Myth?*

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### **A sermon by the Rev. Thee Smith**

*In the name of God: Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, & Friend. Amen*

As a father Gary Rudoren is willing to act like a clown; like a clown acting-out in front of his children. But listen to his story. Maybe we'll see there's something more awesome going on.

It happens that Rudoren is not only a father but also a professional comedian. As a new father he wanted to give his children a personal inheritance" something of his vocation as a comic. Last summer he wrote the following account of his effort in a blog called, "The Responsibility Project." There he described how he has been raising his twins. Every day he practices laughing with them so they will learn it as a lifelong habit" laughter as a way of life. Listen to how he does it, and imagine if this had been your father!

"[I'm] not one of those parents with a million rules," Rudoren writes, "but there is one thing I insist on: The first thing my kids should see when they wake up is a smile."

For good measure after naps I usually jump up and down when I walk into their room to show how excited I am to see them ... When the twins were babies, I'm fairly certain they thought they were about to be attacked by a crazed giant.

Since the age of 18 months or so, they stand up in their cribs and jump up and down with me as I exclaim, "Naps are over!" "Naps are over!" "like a victory dance ...

Early on in ... raising kids, it struck me that among the many, many, responsibilities of being a parent . . . [was] to make sure that my children learned what's funny ... [and] how to view oneself with humor "" I felt [that] would help them grow into the wonderfully engaged human beings we hope they'll become ,

I started simply, with laughing lessons.

From the time my son, Lev, and my daughter, Shayna, were little, maybe three months old, I would place them on our bed after naps ... I'd look down into their tiny little faces and begin chanting:

"Ha, ha, ha ...

Hee, hee, hee ...

Hi, hi, hi ...

Ho, ho, ho ..."

[Now, it's] not enough to just say this series of rhythmic syllables; you have to believe it, sell it. I would rub my hands around my Santa-sized stomach and continue the chant. "Ha, ha , Hee, hee , Hi, hi , Ho, ho , Huu, huuu." It took a while, but eventually I earned some big smiles ...

I added ... bits in my routine ... rub my tummy, do a bit of a jig, bop my big head around ... [and blow] a few loud and loving raspberries on their bellies. I have no scientific facts to back this up, but I firmly believe my twins discovered laughing earlier than most because of our daily lessons ... [[Gary Rudoren, "Funny 101," The Responsibility Project by Liberty Mutual, June 3, 2010](#)]

Well thank you, Gary Rudoren, for daring not only to act-the-clown to clown around like that with fatherhood, but also to tell the rest of us about it! We can only imagine what we might be like today if *our* dads had done something similar!

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Now, we have seen Rudoren as a father being willing to act like a clown in front of his children. But after hearing his story maybe we also see something more awesome going on.

Likewise in today's gospel story we see God the Father acting-out something mythic in front of his children. But here too, maybe we see something more awesome going on.

"For we did not," 2 Peter writes in today's second reading,

... we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we [were] eyewitnesses ... when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain (2 Peter 1.16-18).

So today, as we celebrate Holy Baptism with these candidates before us, we have two models of transfiguration to commend to you parents, grandparents and godparents; and two ways for your young ones to inherit that heavenly voice that says to each one of us, "*You* are my beloved child, with *you* I am well pleased.'

On the one hand we have the humane model of the human face transfigured with laughter. You know what such people are like: souls lit-up with hilarity, relentlessly cheerful; merry spirits indomitable even in the face of struggle and calamity.

On the other hand we have the gospel model of the human being transfigured with holiness. Here again we know such persons: lit-up with the love of God, we see them loving self and neighbor, loving family, friends and strangers, and even loving enemies as they become more and more conformed to the likeness of our Savior Christ "more and more like "lamps shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in all hearts' (2 Peter 1.19).

So yes, yes: on the one hand let us cultivate practices of:

"Ha, ha , Hee, hee , Ho, ho," and include miles and miles of smiles and smiles.

On the other hand, following today's gospel witnesses, we commend to you more awesome practices:

Faith, faith ... Hope, hope ... and Love, love;  
and "of course" also

Forgive, forgive ... and Rejoice, rejoice ... and "oh yes, did I mention? "Love, love.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

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Moreover today, like Gary Rudoren's "responsibility project," we vow to be responsible for these young lives before us:

"responsible for seeing . . . [them] brought up in the Christian faith and life' . . . [and] "by our prayers and witness [helping them] grow into the full stature of Christ,"

so that God will"

Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit ... [and]  
Send them into the world in witness to [God's] love ... [and, in company with us]  
Bring them to the fullness of [God's] peace and glory

[*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 302, 305-306].