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Do you know this guy?



He is Jack Andraka, an American inventor, scientist and cancer researcher. He is only 20 years old and attends Stanford University. When he was 15, he invented a new way to detect early stage pancreatic cancer by using a filter paper dipstick. His method makes it 168 times faster, over 26,000 times less expensive, and over 400 times more sensitive than the current standard for pancreatic cancer detection.

Thanks to that invention, he earned the grand prize at the 2012 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair at age 15, and was invited as a TED conference speaker in 2013. Professor Anirban Maitra at Johns Hopkins University said, “This kid is the Edison of our times. There are going to be a lot of light bulbs coming from him.”

Many people were quite impressed with that brilliant invention, and interested in how he was educated, especially how his parents had helped him. Jane, Jack’s mum, shared that she wanted to develop her kids to be creative and resilient enough to fulfil their own potential.

What’s remarkable is that she and her husband had tried to have family time regularly and use it as a channel of education. Jane interviewed as follows: “We’re not a super-athletic family. We don’t go to much football or baseball. Instead we have a million [science] magazines [and] sit around the table and talk about how people came up with their ideas and what we would do differently.”

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I think that they are wise parents because ‘family talk’ is one of the best ways to educate children how to listen to others, how to speak their opinions, how to cope

with problems, and how to learn constructively, cooperatively and creatively in a safe space.

Parents can also recognise their children’s concerns, wishes, weak points, or talents, which is critical in children’s education because the role of parents is the most important. But, you know, it’s so hard to educate children appropriately for there are so many variables.

Our efforts cannot always make good results for our kids, and sometimes have a bad influence on them. We aren’t able to do everything needed by our kids; rather, there are many things we cannot do for them, for example, their school life.

Even Jack shared his bad experience of being bullied severely in school since grade 8. He was so hurt and suffered from deep depression, and felt like committing suicide. He interviewed like this: “I was really alone and completely sad and depressed because I didn't really see a way out. Science was a space of comfort for me where I could escape from all that.”

However, his parents didn’t know what happened to their son in school and how desperately he struggled to overcome the bullying until Jack put the issue on the table. Yes, in fact, there are fewer things we parents can do than might be thought.

This is my third year in this placement. Thankfully, Celine and Helen have been enjoying their school life with many good friends. However, at first it wasn’t easy for them to settle down in a new school environment. Many students had grown up together from kinder, so they had made strong relationships.

Not only kids, but also their parents had known each other for a long time, so it’s hard to break into the already formed community. For some time Celine and Helen felt excluded slightly, and Yoo Mi and I had the same feeling. But, there’s nothing I could do as a father; I felt incapable and limited.

At that time what I could do was to pray to God with all my heart. I entrusted their school life and their future into his hands, and trusted what he would do because I believed God has loved them so much. With God’s grace, they could overcome the hardships in the early stages without big problems. I reckon such experience can be a good asset for them to understand and accept strangers inclusively.

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What’s interesting is that when I read today’s Gospel reading, John 14:1-14, I found the same anxiety I felt in the appearance of Jesus described in the passage. Today’s scripture is talking about Jesus’ last conversation with his disciples before being arrested by the Jewish authorities.

The last meeting started from the last supper and Jesus’ washing of his disciples’ feet in John chapter 13 and finished with his heartfelt prayers for his followers and the faith community in chapter 17. At this Jesus looked like a mum leaving her young children. He desperately tried to relieve their worries and fears by comforting them and answering their questions.

Look, here, we need to think about the situation of Jesus’ 12 disciples thoroughly. All of them willingly left their home town, their families, and their occupations trusting that they could change the world with their master. They strongly believed that their Rabbi could overthrow the Roman Empire and set up a strong independent Jewish kingdom. Yes, they bet their lives on the dream.

Furthermore, only a few days ago they could see how fervently the Israelites welcomed and praised Jesus when they entered into Jerusalem. Therefore, they couldn’t accept Jesus’ sudden farewell. They were confused, and didn’t know what’s going on. They panicked like orphans left alone unexpectedly.

To comfort them, Jesus promised two things. First, he promised to come back to be with them again. In verse 3 he told them, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” Second, he confirmed not to leave them as orphans. In verse 18 he said, “I will not leave you as orphans.” So, he promised the Holy Spirit as their new helper.

In verse 16 Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.” As Jesus asked, God sent His Spirit to support them whenever they needed him. Yes, at the last moment Jesus entrusted his disciples into God’s hands. For there was nothing he could do at that time.

This commission of Jesus is the core of his last conversation with disciples. The highlight is found in his prayer to God in chapter 17:11: “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me.”

This commission reveals Jesus’ mothership representing his unconditional love and sacrifice. God accepted Jesus’ prayer responsibly and protected the disciples with sincere heart. God did everything for them through the works of the Holy Spirit. This is God’s mothership representing protection and responsibility.

Likewise, our triune God has protected us and our families as our mother. Our God wouldn’t ignore our prayers for our children just as he didn’t do to Jesus, and will guard our loved ones as the apple of her eye. As parents, we cannot do everything for our kids, but we don’t need to worry about them because they have God as their mother. What good news!

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Sisters and brothers,

Today is Mother’s day, the day for giving our heartfelt thanks to our mums. It is needless to say how much a mother loves her child. As I shared in the children’s talk, most mums wouldn’t stop giving and loving their children until they die.

I would like to extend our thanks to God our mother as well; the divine love for us is beyond all description. So, today let us not forget God our mother’s amazing love and sacrifice for us. God proclaims through the prophet Isaiah: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” Amen.