



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

Aylan Kurdi

Like most other things in life we yield to rituals, patterns and structures and even though we might feel goaded by these rites and customs at the same time they provide us with reassurance.

This is probably the biggest lesson I learned in life and I have always believed that it is one that I want to pass on to my kids. Every father wants to make sure that he gives back to his kids as much proficiency, skill and knack as possible knowing that life can get so complicated.

As a matter of fact I wanted my kids to take as much initiative as possible, to learn to choose, to investigate, to delve into the beautiful experiences that life opens up to us but I also wanted them to have the reassurance that in the moment of conflict they can draw strength.

So in other words you become almost fanatical about your children. You try to make it a point to teach them at every turn in their life. You demand they reflect on what they did and the consequences of what they are doing. You show them the pluses and the minuses of what they say and of what they do. We all know that the world at some point in our life becomes belligerent and unwilling.

Like every other dad in the world we teach kids mainly through the rules of play.

I have always believed that the way we play is the way we live and the way we think. So I wanted my kids to learn life through play. It sure isn't easy teaching children how to lose and at the same time learn something from that experience because pain is never a simple lesson for parents to teach their children. I tried to teach my kids in the time I had with them when they were still young to be and play with others, to take care of each other, to realise that there are people who need our support.

For example, I recall with a great deal of reminiscence the beautiful moments when we used to go to the beach. The big delightful and colourful umbrella, the screaming of the kids as we applied sunscreen all over their faces, the sulking when it was time to stop swimming and to go and eat and the mope as we pack the beach bag to go home.

So these beautiful memories dressed up in a choreography of sounds of the sea as it squirms on the sand and the colours that dress up the beach, and the waves and the smell of salt that fills the air and the chuckling of the kids as they eat water melon before heading back home, happy and talking all about the starfish they would have caught and the crab that bit them and the bee that chased them.

Now all of this in my mind and in the mind of so many others has changed dramatically.

The beach has come to mean pain and sadness – just look at the eyes of Aylan's dad.



Aylan Kurdi's tragedy has changed the significance of what a 'beach' is, as it turns into a cemetery and a repository of unfinished narratives. Beaches now represent a tragedy. People are being washed up on our shores like dead fish and our look of surprise is placid.

We are doing nothing almost expecting that these tragedies do happen.

Aylan has shown us that serenity exists no more, that people cannot live together, that we are indifferent and hateful towards each other.

Religion, the state, the NGOs have failed us. The terrible imagery of baby Aylan is an important one that cannot go unnoticed marking a decadent society. This terrible imagery is a frightening reality and an incredibly painful process – a fact that puts us all to shame.

Because when we fail our little ones it cannot get worse than that.

When dads cannot teach, protect and comfort their children, it doesn't get any worse. The world has failed our little ones.

The boy who should be spending time with his siblings playing on the beach, learning through play, exploring and

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discovering ends up being swallowed by what he loves.

Imagine for a moment what this little boy had to go through; the gasps, the lament, the fear of being drawn away from his mummy, from his family.

In those last moments he would be listening to his father shouting out for him as he tries to steer the boat to safety. The waves that engulfed him must have felt cold and dark. The pain as he swallowed water must have been frightening – most probably unable to keep himself above the waves for more than a few seconds at a time, until he had to

give up as his lungs got flooded with sea water.

This is terrible.

We have seen too many tragedies of the sort happening. This world has no more tears to shed.

I have given up on anyone wanting to find solutions be it the United Nations, the European Union or initiatives by individual countries. It's as if we are playing for time, hoping that at some point something will change but until then our shores, the idyllic natural playground of every child will wash up more corpses of little boys and little girls like Aylan, or ladies like Aylan's mother or men like Aylan's father.

I will end with a Facebook status my son Karl uploaded a few moments after Aylan's photo went viral:

"Thousands are dying at Europe's feet and we dare accuse these people of being opportunistic and siphoning off our resources just because they are escaping war and crime in their countries, which is the aftermath of the European colonialism that looted these countries. Now, we stand and watch and worse still, some glorify the idea of 'sending them back'."

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