

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

Gen 2:18-24

Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Heb 2:9-11

Mk 10:2-16 or 10: 2-12

George F. Riley, O.S.A.

It was natural that Jewish mothers should wish their children to be blessed by a great and distinguished Rabbi. Especially, they brought their children to such a person on their first birthday. It was in this way that they brought the children to Jesus on this day.

We will fully understand the almost poignant beauty of this passage only if we remember when it happened. Jesus was on the way to the Cross – and he knew it. Its cruel shadow can never have been far from his mind.

It was such a tension in his mind as that he had time to take them in his arms and he had the heart to smile into their faces and maybe to play with them awhile.

The disciples were not boorish and ungracious men. They simply wanted to protect Jesus. They did not quite know what was going on, but they knew quite clearly that tragedy lay ahead and they could see the tension under which Jesus labored. They did not want him to be bothered. They could not conceive that he could want the children about him at such a time as that. But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me.”

Incidentally, this tells us a great deal about Jesus.

1. It tells us that he was the kind of person who cared for children and for whom children cared.
2. He could not have been a stern and gloomy and joyless person.
3. There must have been a kindly sunshine on him.
4. He must have smiled easily and laughed joyously.

It also tells us about the kind of disciple Jesus is looking for.

1. There is a child's humility. There is a child who is an exhibitionist, but such a child is rare and almost always the product of misguided adult treatment. Ordinarily the child is embarrassed by prominence and publicity. He has not yet learned to think in terms of place and pride and prestige. He has not yet learned to discover the importance of himself.

2. There is the child's obedience. True, a child is often disobedient, but, paradox thought it may seem, his natural instinct is to obey. He had not yet learned the pride and the false independence which separate a man from his fellow-men and from God.

3. There is the child's trust. That is seen in two things.

a. It is seen in the child's acceptance of authority. There is a time when he thinks his father knows everything and that his father is always right. Instinctively the child realizes his own ignorance and his own helplessness and trusts the one who, as he thinks, knows.

b. It is seen in the child's confidence in other people. He does not expect any person to be bad. He will make friends with a perfect stranger, and asked him to tie his shoe lace. The child has not yet learned to suspect the world. He still believes the best about others. That trust is a lovely thing.

4.. The child has a short memory. He has not yet learned to bear grudges and nourish bitterness. Even when he is unjustly treated – and who among us is not sometimes unjustly treated – he forgets, and forgets so completely that he does not even need to forgive.

Indeed, of such is the kingdom of God.