

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time (B)  
October 4, 2009

And Jesus said, “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.”

For the past three weeks we’ve been hearing about children and how children are what we are to strive to be like and that if we are like children, we will inherit the kingdom of God.

And so, today’s illustration of Jesus welcoming children, embracing them and blessing them should be nothing new for us.

In fact, we should already know that because children have a special place with God and in the kingdom of God, we should naturally strive to be like children ourselves.

And being like children, especially in Jesus’ time, means being willing to let go of all power, status, and rights.

As you know, this can be difficult for us.

Our society has trained us to seek power, status, and a voice.

It has told us that we are to strive to reach the top in whatever we do – business, athletics, academics, and so forth.

We are not to stop trying for perfection, honor, and making a name for ourselves until we reach that point where we can’t go any higher.

This is what our culture and our society tells us.

Now, I'm not completely condemning this.

Striving to be our best can be a good, holy, and virtuous thing.

After all, God calls us to use our gifts and talents to the best of our ability in helping to bring about the kingdom of God.

And we should always strive to be perfect...as God is perfect that is.

However, we can't ignore the fact that Jesus uses a child as the example of that which we are to strive to become in life.

And a child, as I said before, was a nobody in Jesus' time.

Yet, this is the type of person Jesus chose to use to illustrate his message of, "if we want to receive the kingdom of God – eternal life, peace, and happiness – we have to humble and lower ourselves to become like children."

And this means that we have to "believe as children believe, love as children love, abandon ourselves as children abandon themselves," and be willing to be trained, educated, raised, nurtured , and led as children.

Accepting this and being willing to live it in our lives can be difficult.

But, let's not forget that with great sacrifice comes great reward and the reward in this case is none other than the kingdom of God.

This is after all, what we all should be striving for in life as disciples of Jesus Christ, namely, to be united as one with God and all the saints and angels in the heavenly kingdom.

What a great and wonderful reward to aim for!

And to think that to achieve such a reward requires us to be like children...what better yet!

When we speak of children, what comes to mind?

Our own children perhaps?

Maybe, our grandchildren?

Or possibly it's the smiles, the laughter, the giggles, the crying, the hugs, the kisses, the tiny toes and fingers.

Whatever comes to mind when we picture children, it doesn't hurt to call to mind that which Pope Benedict says about children, "Every child... brings us God's smile and invites us to recognize that life is His gift, a gift to be welcomed with love and preserved with care always and at every moment."

In other words, the birth of a new born baby – that which most people would categorize as one of many "high points" in their lives – concretely shows us God's gift of life, a gift of immeasurable value that is to be welcomed, cared for, and most importantly, cherished and loved.

It is also through the gift of life, especially new life, that we recognize God's loving presence in our own lives.

We see God's guiding hand in a newborn baby's hands.

We see God's face and smile in a newborn baby's face and smile.

We see God's heart on fire for us when we listen to a newborn baby's heart beating.

All in all, we see God in a newborn baby.

Given this, how can we accept and practice various methods that destroy life?

How can we accept the choice for abortion?

How can we practice artificial birth control?

How can we allow euthanasia and the death penalty?

All in all, how can we prohibit the creation and preservation of the gift of all life from conception to natural death...a gift given to us by God and meant to be cherished and loved?

If we truly call ourselves Christians and desire to receive the kingdom of God, it simply doesn't make sense.

Now, I do understand that sometimes there are certain circumstances that leave a person feeling as if he or she doesn't have a choice.

Or how a lack of understanding might cause one to act without considering all the consequences involved.

For those who feel that they might belong to similar categories, please understand that the Church does not condemn these people. Rather, the Church welcomes them back with a message of God's everlasting love.

Furthermore, God has a special gift for these people...it's called reconciliation and He wants to give this to them so that they may be able to feel His unconditional love that has been pouring out for them from the beginning of time.

And so, the Church asks these people to please open their hearts and receive this gift from God...freely given and promising eternal life, peace, and happiness.

This message is not to be hoarded selfishly simply because we are children of God.

Rather, like all children are taught to do at an early age, we are called to share this message with our brothers and sisters – especially those who have not yet heard it.

And so, may we pray for the courage to become like children of God, taking God's message into the world, sharing it with others, and eventually, be able to receive the kingdom of God that is promised to us.