

HOMILY ~ 14th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JULY 8-9, 2023

If you want to fully experience a zoo, a circus or a walk in the woods, take a young child. Young children see things with a sense of wonder and enthusiasm that reveals the joy and beauty in the simplest things. They notice things that adults stopped noticing years ago. Did you ever see a young child on Christmas or on their birthday? Adults have bought all of these expensive toys, and the young child spends the whole day playing with the wrapping paper and the boxes? We could have wrapped empty boxes, and the young child would have been just as delighted. I remember when I was young, when someone in the neighborhood got a new refrigerator; the box was a whole week of fun.

In the Gospel Reading today, we hear, *“Although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the little ones or the children.”* As adults, we stop being amazed or even noticing ordinary things. Most of the time, we are attending to everything except what is right in front of us. We spend so much time ruminating about the past, worrying about the future and being distracted by trivia and the media that we are missing our lives. Young children do not ruminate about the past or worry about the future. They find joy and wonder focusing on what is right in front of them. As adults, I think we make things much too complicated. I walk four miles about four times a week. I do not need a Fitbit to tell me that I have exercised. If I walk, I have exercised; if not, I have not. When I see people walking, running or biking, I have noticed that many of the people are either on the phone or have ear buds in their ears listening to something. I stopped doing that a long time ago. If we are not on our phone or listening to music or podcasts, we are talking to ourselves. We are ruminating about the past or telling ourselves about the future. When I find myself doing that I tell myself, *“not now, just stay in the present,”* and I try not to think about anything. Sometimes I get insights from God during that time because I am not totally distracted from him. This is a spiritual oasis for me, and I am refreshed after that walk. We all need a spiritual oasis. That can be personal prayer time where we are just quiet in the Lord’s presence. It can be weekly Mass. Maybe that is the one time you can just be quiet and think about God.

Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Jesus tells us, *“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* A yoke is something that joins animals together so they work together. They can bear a much greater load working together than the sum of what they could do alone. We should yoke ourselves to Jesus, trust in him, learn from him and things would be much easier. We should accept help from the people that Jesus brings into our lives. We strive to be independent, but why? You can try and do everything alone; but it is much easier with the help of others. Maybe we should stop struggling so much over things and just do the right thing. I do not think we gain great wisdom in our faith through superior intellect. I think we gain wisdom in our faith through the person of Jesus, and you do not have to have superior intellect to get Jesus.

At the School Masses when it is mostly kids here, I ask questions and the kids give the Homily. I started doing this many years ago to keep the kids' attention, and I was amazed that they almost always know the right answers. In fact, sometimes I am amazed at how insightful their answers are. Now do they always do the right thing? No, they are kids, and we need to help them; but adults should know how to do the right thing. If the kids can understand what Jesus is teaching through his example, it does not take superior intellect. *“What would Jesus do”* has become a cliché, but I find myself asking that more and more.

Maybe we all need to be more childlike. Stay in the present and be more aware of the wonder, the beauty and the joy all around us. We do not always have to have an answer for everything. The truth is that there is a lot of mystery in the world and in our lives; and maybe we just need to be more comfortable with that. Maybe we should stop trying to be so independent. Lean on God and the people that God has brought into our lives to help us.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim