

MORNING PRAYER
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
01.08.23

Children are extremely precious to the Lord. It is in children that the future lies. It is the children who carry the treasures of the past, live out their potentialities, and walk forward.

If the human race is to endure, if the Church of God is to live on, it will be in the bodies and the footsteps and the thoughts of the children.

It is a biological truism that the only purpose of an adult is to bring forth the next generation that the species may go on. Everything else may be seen as supporting that. Every prophet, every king, every saint began as a child, and so did every sinner.

God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, took flesh on himself, became a human being, and spent a dozen years as a child. When His disciples inquired about greatness, he showed them a child. Not only that, but He told them to become as little children, even making that a qualification for entering Heaven.

That's not the way people think.

That probably shocked his hearers.

It's the strong adults that run the world.

It is the educated and experienced adults that have the knowledge.

It's obvious that wisdom develops over time

-- with age.

Aren't children inferior?

Jesus says, "Become as a little child."

What is it about children?

Children are weak.

They can't survive on their own.

The most basic necessities of living are beyond their capability.

Without the help of someone stronger

-- they don't make it.

-- Neither do we.

We adults are fond of proclaiming our independence. We like to think we can take care of ourselves.

We can't.

If we become as little children we remember that, and we acknowledge our utter dependence upon God, upon His gifts, His direction, His instruction, and upon those He has placed over us.

Children know very little.

Almost everything they need to know has to be learned.

Adults like to think that they know a great deal. We pride ourselves in that.

But we don't.

Much of what we "know" is not true.

There is far more to learn than we have absorbed. If we become as little children, we acknowledge how little we know, and we acknowledge our utter dependence upon God, upon His gifts, His direction, His instruction, and upon those He has placed over us.

We can be fed, if we will allow ourselves to be fed. Our hurts can be healed, if we let go of them, and allow them to be healed.

We can be taught, if we admit that we don't know.

And we can be forgiven, if we stop making excuses, if we stop running away, and come to the open arms of a loving Father who wants to forgive.

That said, Our Lord has given us a responsibility, an awesome one. He has entrusted us with a part of His role in the nurturing of the continuity of His image in the earth, and of His Church, His chosen Bride.

There are two lessons in today's Gospel reading:

First that there is something to be learned from children, something to be copied and to be lived.

Do we hear them? Do we learn?

And second, that we have been given an awesome responsibility, to receive them in His name, to care for them and protect them, and to teach them what they need to learn. We are responsible for what we do.

In his words,

"whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. "

Do we respect and love the children among us as the Lord does?

Do we present them with an example of godly living?

Do we teach them what is right and true and holy?

Do we give them the knowledge they need to resist the temptations of an evil world?

Do we protect them?

Do we respect them?

Do we hear them

-- both their questions and their wisdom?

Let us bow our heads

Almighty God, heavenly Father, who hast blessed us with the joy and care of children; Give us light and strength so to train them, that they may love whatsoever things are true and pure and lovely and of good report, following the example of their Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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