

February 26 2022

### **A Child-Like Faith**

Throughout the Gospels, we hear of people bringing their children to Jesus for healing, but in this instance, it seemed that the people were bringing their children to Jesus simply to be with him. They weren't asking for anything but that their children be close to Jesus and be touched by him. They wanted them to have a personal encounter with Christ. We can imagine that, after Jesus indignantly told the disciples to let the children come to him, he smiled at the children. We can see him placing a gentle hand on their heads. Maybe we can even imagine him swinging them around and laughing. Jesus enjoyed being with the children. He wants to enjoy our children in the same way—and for them to enjoy and trust him. How faithful are we in bringing our children to Christ? Are they baptized? What about our grandchildren, nieces and nephews, godchildren, our children's friends? Do we ask Jesus to bless them? How is our home and family life shaped by our faith?

When Jesus said that the Kingdom belongs to “such as these,” we consider the characteristics of a young child: vulnerability, trust, dependence, curiosity, and a willingness to believe. Children are also often very persistent, forgiving, generous, affectionate, and simple. These characteristics contrast with what we see in someone who is immature: selfish, self-centered, demanding, easily bored, easily angered. Jesus asks us to be childlike, not childish.

When we become like a child, we trust our Father to know what is best for us. We turn to him for help with all our needs. We look to him for comfort and encouragement. When we are childlike, we are humble. We know we are little, and we know we are called to grow. In addition to our daily prayer, we grow when we make time for spiritual reading and extended moments of refreshment on retreat, when we share our spiritual journey with friends, when we are able to open up to a good spiritual guide. We grow when you make a regular habit of confessing our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We grow when in our sickness we turn to Jesus and in those situations where the illness is serious we ask for the amounting of the sick. The sacraments are for the Christian the way we share in the family life with Jesus.

Children no they are not self-sufficient nor are we. We know that we need the help of both God and others to grow into the saint we are meant to be.

Towards the end of her very short, life, she died at age 23. St Therese of Lisieux meditated on today's Gospel reading this way:

What does it mean to be a child before God? “It is to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything from its father; it is to be disquieted about nothing, and not to be set on gaining our living.... To be little is not attributing to oneself the virtues that one practices, believing oneself capable of anything, but to recognize that God places this treasure in the hands of his little child to be used when necessary; but it remains always God's treasure. Finally, it is not to become

discouraged over one's faults, for children fail often, but they are too little to hurt themselves very much." <sup>1</sup>

May we enter into this day, offering to Jesus ourselves as we learn the way of childlike trust and dependence.

My Lord, it seems like it should be easy to be childlike, but there are so many obstacles. Instead of spending time with you in conversation and wonder, I am often satisfied reading about you and others' experiences of you. Even though you know every thought, word, and deed in my life, I sometimes try to avoid bringing the things I am not proud of to you. I resist being dependent and asking for help. Lord, how can it be so hard to let go and be little? I am consoled when I think of you opening your arms to me as I would to a little child I loved. You smile at me and give me the strength to begin anew each day. Thank you, Lord, for your endless patience, and for your unconditional love.

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*, trans. John Clarke (Washington: ICS, 1977), 138–39.<sup>1</sup>