

Homily. 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 5/6 October 2024.

At the Parish morning Mass on Wednesday we celebrated the Guardian Angels. In the gospel for this celebration Jesus warned us not to despise the little children for their Angels were constantly in Gods presence. He then added that if we really want to be great in God's eyes we have to change and become like children. This is a constant message in Mark's gospel. We've heard it over the past couple of weekends and we hear it again today at the end of Jesus challenging teaching on Marriage. Which begs the question; Just what is Jesus calling us to become like?

If we understand the time and culture Jesus and his disciples lived, his call starts to make more sense. You see, most people lived day to day, a subsistence hand to mouth existence. Children were a blessing as long as they didn't become a burden. Few received any formal education and most children had to work to help the family as soon as they were able. They had no rights at all, no claim to privilege and if they died, and back in those times many did, they were mourned and then, if possible, were quickly replaced. This was the way it was in the Roman Empire of which Palestine was part, the way for farmers, day labourers and trades people.

As he not infrequently did, Jesus saw things differently. For starters he valued women as much as he did men and unheard of in day, he treated them with respect as equals. He also saw in the many little children, families tended to be large, qualities of God that adults seemed to have lost. He recognised in them an innocence, trust and dependency that older, tired, more world-weary and cynical adults no longer possessed. His male disciples seemed focused on power, glory and rewards for

themselves whereas the children simply liked and trusted him for his warmth, kindness and openness to them.

The disciples, acting out their culture, tried to stop the children from coming to Jesus. They saw them as a nuisance, a bother in their adult business. Conversely, Jesus saw them as an example to all of us about how we can relate to God and to each other with joy, happiness and trusting goodness. For God is the giver of all good gifts and the greatest gift was and remains Jesus, God with us, so what is their to fear? The answer is, nothing at all, unless we are on about our business of power rather than God's business of sharing in the abundance of grace. In times rich or poor, in sickness or health, for better and for worse, our committed relationships such as Marriage should aim for this trusting freedom of heart and mind, for we are one body, one in being through it all.

My parents, Wal and Carmel, were married on the 5th of October in 1957, some 67 years ago this weekend. I can tell you that their Marriage was far from plain sailing with sometimes too generous a share of financial, physical and emotional challenges. Nevertheless, despite Dad's sudden death 2 weeks shy of what was to be their 33rd anniversary, they saw their was through it all. We know this isn't and can't be this way it is for everyone, but the goal that Jesus upholds remains. Working with God, our friend and trustworthy Father on becoming God's children, joyfully fearless and reliant on God's eternal goodness stays. Becoming like this is timeless, our best way to enter and taste even now the Kingdom's joys.