

Homily. 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 2/3 October 2021.

This is the fourth weekend in a row that we've listened to Jesus attempting to teach His disciples about faith, with its ideals, challenges, and consolations. I say, 'attempting to teach His disciples' because on each occasion they either didn't get what Jesus was saying or were resistant to His words. What you and I have to remember is that we are the disciples being addressed today and that, despite our many advantages and the light of the Resurrection shining on us our response, more often than not, sounds and looks like that of the original Twelve.

Jesus teaching is challenging. It always has been, otherwise it wouldn't be anything new, anything worthy of our time and effort, let alone our faith. What we notice is that whenever Jesus words left the disciples confused, objecting or fearful, He turned to practical examples to show them what He was meaning. Jesus felt for their confusion, so He used something that they could see for themselves which revealed what faith looked like and what His words really meant.

This is the case again today when Jesus proposes His ideals for our most intimate and important personal relationships, ideals of forgiveness, fidelity and self-sacrifice for the good of our spouses, life-partners and families. Wiping out the concession of Moses about divorce, a concession given, we are told, because the people were so unteachable back in that time, Jesus offered the example of the little children that people were bringing forward for Him to lovingly touch and bless.

The disciples saw them as a 'nuisance' to their Teacher, shooing them away. Yet, the parents of these children trusted Jesus to do only good,

and the children themselves had no fear of Him, wanting to feel the warmth and kindness of His smile and embrace. In front of His disciples Jesus insisted that they be welcomed and let come near to Him saying that their many small demands were no trouble to Him whatsoever. He said that what the disciples saw in His reaction to these children, and they to Him, exemplified the way we should respond to Him and His teaching. It's this type of openness and desire for Him which is our way into the Kingdom of Heaven, our ticket into God's way and sway over our lives.

No one, including Jesus Himself, discounts the difficulties we can have in living our commitments, the daily demands that fidelity makes on us, the sacrifices involved in being true to our values and principles. We know that Jesus had to pay for His fidelity in the coinage of His own flesh, blood and life. We can't, or at least we shouldn't, attempt to live His words without Him and the help of our community of disciples today. Like the children He welcomes us to come to Him, openly, without fear and full of trusting faith, seeking His blessing and consoling embrace. He will ensure that any obstacles we have to Him are overcome.

Our job is to never deliberately be such an obstacle to anyone seeking closeness, strength and comfort from the Lord. This is why we pray in the Mass that, refreshed and nourished by the sacrament we receive here, we may be transformed into what and who we receive, the welcoming face and voice of the Lord who teaches truth, blesses and loves us all.