

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Childlike Joy Twenty-sixth Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, October 4, 2014 8:15 AM
Jb 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; **Lk 10:17-24** **St. Francis of Assisi, religious** (Being childlike is to live in the present moment and to recognize that our heavenly Father is caring for us.)

It is a coincidence, a happy one, that today's daily reading is about rejoicing and joy because today is the memorial of St. Francis, and **St. Francis was a saint of joy**. We have to keep in mind that joy is a very fundamental quality. **It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit—charity and joy. It's joy that makes poverty and humility something light and even charming** because if we took merely a materialistic view of poverty, it's simply lack; it's absence of something. There is no charm in that. Humility could be interpreted by some people as a lack of self-esteem or self-value. There is no charm in that either. But with joy humility and poverty become something that radiates something else, **something of the Spirit**.

That was **St. Francis' great gift that he could radiate something of the Spirit** without all the splendor that people use and what has been used in religion over the centuries, because temples have always become places of splendor: gold, precious stones, marble wonderful things, beautiful things, all to express the dignity and the wonder of God and God's goodness, to put into some kind of material form a sense of praise, if you want to put it that way. And that's legitimate, but Francis did it without all that. He didn't need the props, so to speak. He had it inside of himself.

That really is the goal of Christian life in the gospel. That's what Jesus is talking about here. **"You have hidden from the learned and the clever."** We don't usually think of God as hiding things. But here Jesus is praying and rejoicing in fact. He is rejoicing that God has hidden from the learned and the clever what he has **revealed to the simple, the childlike**.

You might ask yourself: What's so great about being childlike? **What is being childlike?** Elsewhere Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is made for such as these," referring to

children. What is that about? Well, it's all related to this. **Children**, first of all, **don't worry about the past**; they don't have much past. **They don't think much about the future**; it's too distant. **They just live in the present moment and are very aware of being taken care of**. And there is something about that that is just right, not to get too tied up with our past—we have to let that go—not to get too concerned about the future—it hasn't happened yet—but to live in the present moment, to recognize that our heavenly Father is caring for us, is supporting us, is guiding us, and is revealing to us. If we are simple enough, childlike enough, present enough, present enough to the present moment, God will reveal to us what the learned can never find with all their learning and studying and research, no matter what sort of instruments they build, what sort of telescopes and microscopes and cyclotrons. They will never find it, even though those are all fine things. And the clever who are just so able to do so much, but often they can't find what's right in front of them, the presence of God.

So this is all about rejoicing in the presence of God, and in our trust that God is waiting for us, has written our names in heaven, as it's put here, meaning that **we have an assurance that we will be with him in heaven. And this should make life joyful**. It should help us not get caught up in all of the struggles for more and for possessing and for getting ahead and for competing and all those things, some of which are needed in life, but which are carried to far too great an extreme in the world, at least today. So in the name of St. Francis, we might renew our sense of commitment to being joyful people.