

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Great Value of Children Second Week in Ordinary Time Friday, January 22, 2016
8:15 AM 1 Sm 24:3-21; **Mt 18:1-5, 10, 12-14** **Day of Prayer for the Legal**
Protection of Unborn Children (We are sent to care for the whole body of Christ, even those parts of the body that don't even know they are part of the body.)

“In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.”

One of the unique calling cards of Jesus' message, his gospel message, was the word in Greek *metanoia*. It is a word signifying **a change of mind, a change of position, a change of attitude** toward—what? Well, **toward life, toward the world, toward God, toward everything**. And **much of his teaching is an elaboration of what kind of changes are necessary for people to embrace the work of God, which he called “the kingdom.”**

Among the many changes that are required is **a new way of looking at children**. In the ancient world, children were not exactly esteemed. At times they are actually considered assets, but not values in themselves, and not really already important, rather, perhaps having some potential to become useful, significant, important, valuable. Jesus' view is, no, **children are already valuable, useful, important, significant beings as children; and it is God's will to protect all of them**. In the ancient world, of course, the children of the wealthy, the kings, the potentates, were well protected and well cared for, but not those who belong to other classes.

Now one of the most significant changes in our society in the last fifty to eighty years is that **Christian principles and standards of behavior and values have lost their former significance** in the eyes of the people of power, in the eyes of the intellectuals, in the eyes of the public. Along with this loss of value, **we see a loss of an attitude of respect for life at all levels**. This is really a great sadness and something that will cause great pain to our society as a whole, and already is and has and will continue to.

Basically the values espoused by Christ are the values that lead to prosperity and goodness for individuals and for whole societies. But human beings always have to learn everything the hard way. And **the Church itself has to find new ways of promoting the age-old values of Christ.** Part of what the Church has to do today is to **reevaluate its relationship to society as a whole**, which it is doing by necessity, thinking about society much as it did way before the time of Constantine, when society was seen to be fundamentally hostile to the values of Christ. Indeed, in many ways **society is once again hostile to the ways of Christ.** And I include not only most of Western society but other parts of the world as well. I can't say that the societies of China or India are really positive in regard to the values of Christ, or most countries in Africa, or most countries. **It's against the spirit of the age.**

Nonetheless, **we are anointed to do God's work.** We are empowered through God's word. We are baptized into the body of Christ, and **we are sent to care for the whole body, even those parts of the body that don't even know they are part of the body.** It's often a thankless task, and yet is one that we must continue.

Today we acknowledge the Supreme Court decision *Roe vs. Wade*, but that, of course, was simply **a warning that something is deeply wrong and needs to be remedied.** And it's still our responsibility and our mission to remedy that. How we do it, is not clear. But we begin by **returning to the Scriptures and allowing the word of God to inform us and to renew us and to help us to change so that we become receptive to it and to what it holds,** in particular here the great value that every single child has in the sight of God.