

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Reborn to Be Childlike Seventh Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, May 21, 2016

8:15 AM Jas 5:13-20; **Mk 10:13-16** (St. Christopher Magallenes, priest, and companions, martyrs; BVM) (A child naturally accepts what is good, what is life giving, what is life supporting, what is nurturing, what is comforting. And that is the nature of the kingdom.)

“Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

This little episode from the life of Jesus tells us a lot about him and about actually God himself, because Jesus’ mission was to open people to the kingdom. His view is that **we are created in a certain natural way for God’s purposes, and so the closer we are to our beginning, the more open we are to God’s work.** But the older we get the more separated, insulated, isolated, detached we get from the original projectile that we were born into the world as. So there is this great preference for the child.

Now we know that children can be difficult. When they are uncomfortable, they just cry, and of course before they learn to speak they can’t even describe what it is that’s wrong. But on the other hand, **children accept love without any objection.** In fact they naturally desire love, affection, nurture, nutrition, compassion. They naturally absorb it, and **only resist when they are hurt or become fearful or have been traumatized or something has happened that has interrupted the course of nature.** So Jesus can say, **“Whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.”** **A child naturally accepts what is good, what is life giving, what is life supporting, what is nurturing, what is comforting. And that is the nature of the kingdom.**

Now what happens? We grow. We enter into conflict with the world. We encounter hostility. **We become wounded.** We find others untrustworthy. We feel cheated. We forget the blessings of the past: the nurture and the benedictions that we have received, and we hold onto

our wounds and our memories of injury, and we become very unchildlike: bruised and weary and wary and fearful. And then the kingdom of God appears before us and we don't want to enter.

We are wary. We are fearful. **We really don't believe anymore in goodness, the goodness that was so natural when we were infants and children.** So life in this way can spoil, warp, calcify the human spirit, the human heart. And this can become set into society.

In Jesus' day children were considered noncitizens. In our day they are noncitizens if they are not yet born. We can just take whole swathes of people and just exclude them from our concern. **In the kingdom all are included. So to receive the kingdom we have to change. We have to seek the kind of healing that James is talking about.** We have to learn how to visit our old wounds and let God bring about something new. St. Teresa of Avila says that our memories are all faulty because we remember something that happened in our past that was very negative and we thought God wasn't there, but that's false. God was there. We weren't aware of God, but God was there. **Now we have to get a new memory based on the fact that God was really there and God is always caring for us, but we are not listening and we are not following.** We are taking care of ourselves; we are not letting God take care of us. We are doing it our way; we are not doing it God's way.

The cross is God's own message to us of his completely unlimited and unlimiting love, but we stand back. So we need to change. We need to become like children again. **We need to be reborn in a new innocence, in a new openness, in a new willingness to receive and to accept God and everything God wants for us,** and not to pretend that we know better, and not pretend that we can create anything for ourselves that is better than what God wants for us. Those sad illusions have a very great power over our minds, but they are nothing but illusions. This gospel is about new life.