

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Mar 1st 2014

Whenever I read this Gospel, I think about how truly dependent children are---and about the wonderful freedom and joy they derive from that dependence. Jesus was trying to help his followers to see two points with respect to allowing children to come to him. One was to connect his care for the children with his ministry thus far. He had been curing people that were exposed, helpless or weak: a demoniac, a deaf man, a blind man and a Gentile woman's daughter. And now, by blessing the children, he was engaging with another group that shared the same characteristics. The other, and much larger, point Jesus was making was to help his disciples understand that to truly come to him as followers, they, too, would have to become quintessentially dependent upon him.

In the first reading from James, one can hear the writer implore people to become dependent on our Lord. If you are suffering, pray to God: depend on him to grant you the grace you need to get through the suffering. If you are in good spirits, pray to God in praise—recognize your joy is the fruit from your dependence on God. If you have sinned, pray to God for forgiveness—depend on him for the grace for your soul to be at peace again.

As the reading from James states and the analogy from Jesus intimates, dependence on Jesus is overwhelmingly beneficial. Jesus was hoping that his disciples would connect with memories of their own childhoods as well as with the reality of the children right in from of them. Children are completely dependent on their parents for their health, for their sense of being deeply cared for and for their food. And because they are so freely dependent, they can then enjoy each moment of their day. Each day is filled with discovery, with the joy of being with others, with no worries about anything else. And because of this, they can feel deeply joyful; they can go through their day and get ready to sleep with nothing left on their minds to worry about. They can begin and end each day in peace.

Jesus invites us to do the same. When we are physically, emotionally or spiritually suffering, he invites us to be dependent on him. In a way, our suffering can “clear away” our day-to-day worries. Some of these seem quite small when we are in pain. And that “clearing away” leaves room for us to focus on our Lord. To become dependent upon him. And when we do, we are assured by our Lord that our one step toward him will be met with an incredible amount of steps by him toward us. As we become more dependent upon Jesus, we will feel the showering of grace he is constantly sharing; we will find more joy and more peace in our lives.

Sometimes as we grow from childhood to adulthood, through many joys and struggles, we are hesitant to be dependent, even with our God. Jesus invites us to place our hesitancy to the side and walk toward him, to depend on him. It is a way to truly follow him, it is a way to get through the toughest challenges in deep peace, and, it is a way to feel the deep joy that our Lord so wants us to experience in our daily lives.

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