

Well today's Gospel is extremely rich in meaning and you could literally spend hours discussing and unpacking it. And so I know how much the prospect of a multi-hour homily excites all of you and so in the interests of time and my own personal safety after mass, I will only focus on the latter part of today's Gospel in which we're told our Lord Jesus becomes "indignant" with His disciples.

However, to fully understand the significance of this latter part of today's Gospel and Jesus' anger towards His disciples here, we must *first refer to a previous incident* between our Lord and His apostles recorded just a chapter earlier in Mark 9:33-37. In fact, this earlier incident was the Gospel passage only two Sundays ago on September 23rd. And so if you remember that Gospel two weeks ago, the apostles were truly being childish and immature in that they were seriously arguing with each other about who was the greatest among them. I mean, can you imagine such an awkward argument?

Well after our Lord finished teaching them that true greatness is found in lowliness and selfless service, Christ lovingly places a child in their midst and says, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my

name, *receives me*; and *whoever receives me, receives not me, but the One who sent me.*” This is pretty amazing here how our Lord essentially equates Himself to a weak, defenseless, lowly child, who in first-century Palestine would’ve been considered to be socially worthless, not deserving of any serious attention. Yet not only does our Lord Jesus embrace children with Divine love and joy, but He exalts them as precious models of purity, innocence, holiness, and discipleship.

Now fast-forward only one chapter ahead to our Gospel passage today in Mark 10 and what do we have? We have the *disciples rejecting children and stopping them from coming to Jesus!* For whatever reason, the disciples are blatantly disregarding what Jesus had *literally just* told them about receiving children in His name! So one can certainly understand our Lord’s very human indignation here.

But what is our Lord teaching us in the Gospel today? “*Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.*” Our Lord is talking about the unique receptivity of children, and isn’t it truly unique? I mean, you could give a candy wrapper or a penny to a small child and they’ll treat it as if it were a

million dollars! *Children love to receive, and almost everything they receive, they consider a gift!* For children are *totally dependent* on others, especially their parents, *for everything*: their life, well-being, food, shelter, toys, etc. *Children receive everything as a gift*—their inherent mode of joyful receptivity is built into their beautiful nature!

This is the type of receptivity that our Lord Jesus is calling us to adopt in our relationship with Him! In order to become true disciples of Christ, we must *first become like children*, and receive *everything that the Lord is and wants to give us, as pure gift!* For in one sense of its meaning, the “Kingdom of God” *is Jesus Himself*; for the Kingdom of God is *fully present within the very Person of Jesus!* And so, *like a child*, we must freely receive the Lord into our life, so that He may dwell in our hearts and be present in the world *through us!*

Practically, even though this may be difficult at times, *every small child* we encounter in our daily lives should serve as a powerful reminder to us of our duty to become *child-like and freely receive the Lord and all of His teachings and blessings with joyful love!* One of those teachings that our Lord Jesus wants us to receive with humility

and open hearts and minds is His teaching on the great gift of marriage, which in today's Gospel *He explicitly defines* as the permanent, exclusive union of one man and one woman—a union deeply characterized by mutual love and fidelity. And it's not accidental that in today's Gospel our Lord Jesus' definitive teaching on the gift of marriage is inherently connected to His teaching on children, who are the precious fruits and blessings of marriage.

Furthermore, the Lord is also teaching us in today's Gospel that salvation through Him and eternal union with the Blessed Trinity in Heaven is *a pure gift* freely given to us out of the infinite love and mercy of God! Indeed, *everything that God has given to us* and wants to give us is *pure gift*! This means that there is *absolutely nothing* we can do to somehow “earn” salvation *purely by our own merits*. Rather, Jesus Christ and the salvation He won for us is a *free gift* offered out of love that we're invited to freely accept out of love.

So we need to ask ourselves, what is preventing me from receiving the Kingdom of God, Who *is* Jesus, our Lord and Savior? What sins, fears, doubts, memories, and wounds are stopping me from receiving all

that the Lord wants to give me and teach me? And connected to that is: What is keeping me from receiving all that God wants to give me and teach me *through others* in my life? Moreover, is there anything that is stopping me from fully receiving the gift of salvation through Christ?

Jesus is constantly pleading with us through His grace and His Church: “Let me love you! Let me give you what you seek! Let me save you and give you the freedom, love, and happiness that you desire! *Let go* of whatever is keeping you from Me and receive all that I am and all that I want to give you! *Just let go, trust Me, and receive!*” This isn’t “pious theological speculation” that’s designed to simply make us “feel good” in some fluffy-puffy superficial way! No, this is Reality with a capital “R”; the Reality of our faith that all of the saints knew well and were so deeply immersed in!

Brothers and sisters, *there is so much* we can learn from small children. As adults, we always like to be in control, and so becoming child-like, “letting go,” and receiving all that the Lord wants to give us and teach us can be difficult. Given our fallen nature, we’re weighed down by our egos and pride, our weaknesses and disordered inclination

towards sin, and so we must constantly beg the Lord for the grace to become like children and freely receive all that He wants to give us!

In a few moments, our Lord Jesus Christ will truly be present here with us, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. As we prepare to receive Him, let us beg him for the grace to become like a child and receive all that He wants to give us and teach us. Indeed, *our Lord Jesus Christ is the model “child” that we as His disciples are called to become!* For our Lord Jesus demonstrated, through His perfect humility, innocence, lowliness, and total obedience to and dependence on the Father, *that He is the model for us, the spiritual “child” par excellence!* So let us ask our Lord for the grace to become a child *like Him*, so that we may freely accept Him with open hearts and minds, for *He is the greatest gift we could ever receive!*