

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, May 25th 2013

Have you ever thought about someone: “that man is being childish” or “that woman has a child-like quality about her?”

These are two very similar looking sentences but ones that are almost thoroughly opposite in their meaning. A child-ISH person and a child-LIKE person are about as far away on a spectrum of personal relationships as can be imagined. The first conjures up selfishness, anger, complaint, a “my way or the highway” attitude and the second suggests recognition of the beauty and splendor of the natural world, a capacity for wonder and awe, an engaging and open personality as well as a sweetness that can be irresistible. To which of these two persons would we be attracted? - No need to answer!

In the gospel passage for today Jesus relates to children who are being presented to him by the people. The disciples want to put a stop to it as they “rebuked” those who were bringing up the children for Jesus to bless. On his part, Jesus “embraced the children and blessed them, placing his hands on them.”

Turning his attention to the disciples Jesus instructs them to “let the children come to me . . . the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” These little ones who have nothing to recommend themselves such as status, wealth, super intelligence or any other quality that would recommend them Jesus willingly and lovingly receives and blesses.

In explaining his actions to the disciples, Jesus likens the acceptance of the Kingdom of God to being like a child. What a beautiful image that is for us to consider. I don’t need all the things that the world seems to value so highly; as a matter of fact I am better off without those “things” as I relate to God and his Kingdom.

Today’s gospel invites us to look to ourselves and to discover those times that our behavior could be described as childish and those that would qualify as child-like. I thank God for the latter in my life and I want to do my best to avoid the former. In other words, I desire to approach God as the children approached Jesus that day and received his blessing – they were simply and just themselves. What a splendid lesson that is.

Tom Shanahan, S.J.