

27th Sunday Ordinary Time, B

One of the easiest things that any of us ever does is to love children. Something inside of us just automatically reaches out to the little ones. That being true of us, we should not find it a remarkable thing that Jesus also loved children.

Today's Gospel reading recalls a familiar and favorite event in the life of our Lord. He was surrounded by a group of parents, who wanted him to touch their children and bless them. This was nothing unusual among the Jews. They often requested this of a notable rabbi.

But the disciples were irritated by it. They felt that Jesus was too busy to be bothered with that type of thing. So they tried to send people away.

When Jesus saw what they were doing, it made him mad. Then he said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then we are told that, "he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them."

There is something significant about this particular occasion. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. He was going to die, and he knew it. He had told his disciples, but they did not understand. The weight of this world was on his shoulders and he was carrying it all alone.

At a time like that, a time of personal stress, most of us become impatient and have little or no time for children. But that is the very time when Jesus wanted children to be around him. He gathered them in his arms, blessed them, and perhaps even played with them for a while.

His love of children was obviously something more than sentimental affection. It was a conscious commitment. He cared for them and believed in them very deeply.

If you and I love children in the same sense that our Lord does, it will do something more than give us a warm feeling on the inside.

What I am saying is that the arguments and bad tempers would be far less frequent, if we thought about the children and cared for them in the same sense that Jesus does.

We could move our thoughts in a wider range and talk about wars. These national tragedies are produced and propagated by adults. Children do not make and drop bombs; adults do. Children do not breed the moral and social rot that creates our cities slums; adults do.

Everyone gets hurt by such things. But ultimately it is the children who suffer the most serious damage. If we cared about little ones as our Lord cared and cares, we would never allow ourselves to get used to wars and slums. Loving children will, first of all, make us penitent.

It will also create and sustain within us a spirit of hope. Someone has said, "The birth of a baby is a sure sign that God has not yet given up on his world." Children are the seed corn of the human race. With every

new generation, there is no telling what may happen. Those tiny hands may someday open the door to a new era of peace on earth and good will toward men. Jesus must felt that as the children gathered around him on that long – ago day. He was going to Jerusalem where the atmosphere would be heavy with hatred. But there, for a little while, he was looking into a fresh faces and feeling the love and trust that belong in a special sense to the young.

When you and I become discouraged about the human race, there are the numbers of ways to deal with it. We can read the Bible and be reminded that people have always had problems, none of which too great for the grace of God to bring them through. We can visit with a friend, in whom we find those qualities of character that make life worth living. Or we can do what Jesus did – spend a little time with children. We think of that reading in term of his ministry to them, which is certainly true. But you can also be sure of this: those little ones ministered to him. He needed what they had to give, and so do we.

Children depend upon us. There is no question about that, and may God help us to be true to that trust. But greater than any of us knows is our dependence upon them. Their presence in our lives makes us penitent for what we are and keeps us hopeful of what we and our world may yet become. **Amen.**