

“...whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child...will NOT enter it!”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time,

Ricky said: “Grandma, why do trees take their clothes off at the end of the summer?”

Grandma: Because they get worn out and need to be exchanged for new ones.

Ricky: Where do their new clothes come from?

Grandma:

Underneath the ground...deep down, Mother Nature is busy preparing their new, spring wardrobe.

Ricky: Grandma, did you ever notice how the sky looks like an upside-down lake?

Grandma: And those little, white clouds look like sailboats, don't they?

Ricky: I wonder where they're sailing to.

Grandma: Maybe to a Cloud-meeting.

Ricky: What would they do there?

Grandma: Probably decide if the earth needs more rain.

Ricky: Gee, God thinks of everything, doesn't he, Grandma?

That charming dialogue between little Ricky and his grandma illustrates one of the points Jesus makes in today's Gospel, which I just read to you from St. Mark, namely:

“Whoever does NOT accept the Kingdom of God like a child...will NOT enter it!”

Ricky's grandma is a perfect model of an adult –who has not lost her sense of childlike wonder.

To 'wonder,' at least in this context, means to see things as a child sees them.

It means to ask the same questions about things that children ask.

To 'wonder' means to see things as if we were looking at them for the very, first time.

It means we see things with the freshness they had when they first tumbled, bright and new, unspoiled from the creative hand of God.

To 'wonder' is to look at a field of wet grass after a rain and see the footprints of God.

It is to look into the eyes of a child and see the fingerprints of God.

For example: *What I am talking about is seen in Charles Colson's book **'Born Again.'** The episode to which I refer occurs when Colson takes us back, several decades, to a summer vacation he spent with his two young boys. He bought them a 14' sailboat and brought them out to a lake with the boat trailing behind the car. When they arrived, a gentle summer rain was falling. But, that didn't dampen their spirits one bit.*

Once they shoved off from the pier, the only sound they could hear was that of rippling water against the boat's hull and the wet, white sail flapping in the wind. Colson's 10-year-old son, Chris, was in control of the boat.

When the boy realized he was the skipper, a marvelous look came over his face. And his eyes flashed with the excitement of knowing that, in his 2 hands, he was holding the power of the wind.

As Colson looked into his son's face and eyes, he, himself, became transfixed. And then, something strange happened. He found himself... talking to God. He still remembers the words:

“Thank you, God, for giving me this son, for giving us this wonderful moment. Just looking now into this boy's eyes fulfills my life. Whatever happens in the future, even if I die tomorrow, my life is complete and full. Thank you!”

Afterward, Colson was amazed and startled at what he had done.

You see, he didn't believe in a personal, i.e., in a caring & loving God. Yet, he had spoken to him as a person. In the joy of the moment, his heart bypassed his mind & affirmed the existence of a personal God.

In his own words, he discovered that...

'Communication with this unproven God is possible.'

Why else had he spoken to him, unless, deep down, he was aware that...

'Someone, somewhere, somehow... was listening.'

Indeed, on that rainy, summer afternoon, Colson discovered, for himself, what spiritual writers & speakers have always maintained:

'Wonder lies in the heart of all prayer and worship.'

This brings me to the practical message contained in today's Gospel.

What IS the practical message from today's Gospel, you ask?

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

It's this. If we find it hard to pray or worship, maybe it's because we have let our sense of child-like wonder go behind some spiritual cloud, so to speak. I mean...

Maybe it's because we haven't taken seriously our Lord's words in today's Gospel:

"Whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child...will NOT enter it."

Maybe it's because we've lost our sense of childlike, not childish, childlike wonder at the world.

Maybe it's because it's been too long since we've had a good walk and a good talk with one of our children or grandchildren...or one of a relative's kids.

John Updike said:

"If we adults do not keep on speaking terms with children, we cease being human beings... and become machines for eating food and earning money."

Albert Schweitzer said:

"The tragedy of life is... what dies inside us... while we are alive."

In summary, Jesus speaks this important, practical message to each of us in today's Gospel:

When the sense of wonder begins to die, then our sense of prayer and worship does, too!

I now close with this prayer:

God, help us keep a sense of 'wonder.' Keep us from becoming blind to your fingerprints on the world around us, especially in the eyes and faces of children.

Help us to keep in touch with the little people around us, so we won't forget what Jesus meant when he said, 'Whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child...will NOT enter it.'

Help us discover, again, how to 'wonder,' so that, through our 'wonder,' we may discover, anew, how to pray and worship.

We make our prayer, as always, through Christ our Lord.

I pray that our ever-powerful, ever-perfect, ever-present God, our Abba, blesses you...

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.