

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 6, 2024

Thank God I'm back to my home of choice. And one observation I made while at home with my niece and her sweet little baby girl was that one of the most exciting times for new parents is when their son or daughter stands on their own for the first time and begins to take their first tentative steps.

Of course, this doesn't happen out of the blue. It follows a series of other steps, rolling over, sitting up, and pulling oneself up to a standing position. But those first couple of steps are really a game-changer, both in a good and not-so-good way. It shows that the boy or girl is developing exactly in the way he or she should, but it also means he or she must now be watched at all times. One lady we visited described it as a butterfly stage. Not an easy task! Parents must be 24/7 alert.

But with that budding independence comes another milestone, one that doesn't get quite as much attention. I call it the "reach and the look up". You know what I'm talking about, right? It's that toddler body language that seems to be universal, seems to be common to nearly everyone. Once a child learns how to wander away from a parent, he or she also learns how to wander back and reach for their mom or dad in that "pick me up" posture. And when a child does that, it's pretty hard to resist.

I believe that kids, always remember they need their family, in fact they need other people.

And too often we adults, it seems to me, spend a lifetime forgetting that very thing. And so we often go through life believing that our opinion is the only one that matters. We often go through life playing by our own rules while expecting others to play by a different set of rules. And we often make our choices simply by doing whatever works for us, without really

considering how it might impact others, or considering what someone else might need from us.

My observation is that we often treat our relationships as being kind of disposable, discarding significant others and friends the moment we become tired of them. We often cling to our grudges, convinced that it is always someone else who needs to do the forgiving, needs to make changes, needs to get on board with our own agenda. And we often go through life as if we are the king or queen of our own little island, go through life convinced that our happiness and comfort is pretty much all that counts. Yes, we sometimes wind up forgetting precisely what children know instinctively.

And the kingdom eludes us.

**“” Amen I say to you, whoever does not
accept the kingdom of God
like a little child will not enter it.”**

So says Jesus to the Pharisees following a conversation he had with them about marriage. In that conversation he quotes from the passage we heard in our First Reading from Genesis, something they would have known well. In this story of creation, the Lord God reveals the deep truth we have been talking about. The passage we heard begins with words that are both simple and profound.

“It is not good for man to be alone.”

Think about that for a moment, and the picture this story paints for us. This was Eden. This was a manifestation of all that was good. This was a kind of heaven on earth. And yet, it wasn't enough, it wasn't complete. A person on their own, isolated, was not what God wanted, was not what God

knew was needed. What that first person needed was another person to be with, to laugh with, to walk with, to care for and most importantly to love.

I think that's who we are. That's who we were created to be. Just like a child. Someone who can't make it on their own. Someone who needs what only other people can offer. Someone who needs to be fed. Needs to be embraced. Needs to have their tears dried and their scrapes mended. Someone who needs to be protected. Needs to be understood and encouraged and forgiven. Put simply, children clearly need other people to make it in this life - physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Can we still be that child, not in a juvenile sense, but be a person who is trusting and aware of their need for others? Can we recognize that we can't do it on our own? Can we acknowledge our own need for companionship, our own need for someone to comfort us and listen to us and accept our faults and failings? And do we understand that OTHERS need those same things FROM us, need US to accompany THEM, just like we need THEM to accompany US? In short, do we really know how badly we need each other?

An elderly couple who has been married for 65 years was asked about their secret, the woman replied, "we were born in a time where if something was broken, you fixed it...rather than throw it away".

In a certain sense, sin is a violation of this deep truth. It's a "turning away from" and a "turning inward". It's a distancing of ourselves from God and from others. It's an elevating of our wants and our will above the wants and will of others. In other words, it's a retreat onto the island of our own ego, our own self-interest, and our own inflated self-image. Simply put, it's a kind of wandering off, but somehow not knowing the importance of coming back.

Please let's not be that person. Rather let's be people who are there for each other and who care for each other and who forgive each other. Let's spend a lifetime reaching out to our God and to those we come in contact with.

And finally let's also recognize all those people who are reaching out to us for a little comfort, a little help and a little love. May we do the faithful thing that is, pick each other up and embrace each other as we journey through life, not alone, but hand in hand with one another.

A Short Story

It was a busy morning, about 8:30, when an elderly gentleman in his 80's arrived at the clinic to have stitches removed from his thumb. He said he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 am. The nurse in attendance asked him to take his seat and since she was free she took time to evaluate his wound. The medico would not be free for another hour and the man was constantly checking his watch.

On exam, it was well healed, so she talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to remove his stitches and redress his wound. While taking care of his wound, she asked him if he had another doctor's appointment that morning, as he was in such a hurry. The gentleman just said that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife. While inquiring he told her that she had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer's disease. The nurse asked if she would be upset if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now. He was surprised and asked him why he was in a hurry. He smiled as he patted her hand and said, 'She doesn't know me, but I still know who she is.' The nurse had to hold back her tears as he left, and thought, 'That is the kind of love I want in my life.'

