

**Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - July 5, 2020**  
**Deacon Steve Livingston**

**“... you have revealed them ... to little ones ...”** What parent’s heart does not melt with the expressions of simple, yet unconditional **love** ... of a little child? What parent has not felt the **awesome** responsibility of ... walking hand in hand with their little one ... sensing their complete, total trust? Or what parent has not seen in the eyes of their children the absolute, wide-eyed belief of everything mom or dad tells them ... and the instant and total dismissal ... of anything to the contrary. Little children are simply the virtues of faith, hope and love in their most pure forms.

Children’s imaginations have not yet fallen into decay thru lack of use and they are ever so curious! They want to know why. They want to learn. Children are open books. They reveal whatever is in their heart. They are honest ... sometimes **uncomfortably** so! If you don’t want an un-sugar-coated, honest answer ... **don’t** ask a child. They will bring up the elephant in the room that the adults don’t want to talk about. They are simple and uncomplicated and **totally** ... without guile.

Jesus tells us His Father reveals Himself to such as these ... not only to children ... but to those who possess these same childlike virtues. He likens His Apostles ... the simple fishermen ... the tax collector ... and the others ... to these “little ones” who would come to accept Him ... as who He was. ... . None of them were particularly learned men ... and as such ... perhaps did not have all the philosophical and legal baggage that kept the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees from being **able** to accept Jesus ... for who he was.

These scholars of the law were the **experts** ... having dedicated their lives to the study of all the complicated intricacies of Mosaic law. Most of the people found these laws burdensome and hard to understand ... which ... of course ... gave those who **did** understand them a very special ... important and exalted place in society. And ... they **liked** it that way. They **liked** things complicated ... it **gave** them power ... and ... in all fairness ... they also believed that that’s the way things **should** be. In any event ... if these scholars of the law were going to be taken to school by anyone ... it was sure not going to be some itinerant carpenter who did **not** even keep the Sabbath. Ultimately it was their knowledge ... their wisdom ... their self satisfaction ... and perhaps their love of the status quo ... their refusal to become **childlike** ... that prevented the Father’s truth from being revealed to them. **“... you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned ...”**

And the Father’s truth is just not that complicated. Jesus tells us it is simple: **“... my yoke is easy, and my burden light ...”**. He takes everything of importance in Mosaic Law and reduces it to a two-part commandment that can be summed up in a **single** word ... that every child understands ... “love”! We do not **need** to be burdened with understanding the fine points of Mosaic law ... but we are to let **love** govern our lives.

But children ... of course ... grow up. And some of us ... maybe even most of us ... get so involved in the cares of the world ... that we lose most ... or sometimes all ... of our childlike trust and faith ... and even love. We **trade** these childlike gifts for the wisdom and learning of the world with all its cynicism. We become adults ... "**sophisticated**" adults, who can no longer **imagine** with childlike wonder ... whose lives are reduced to accumulating possessions ... popularity ... power ... the life of the **flesh** St. Paul speaks of. And when these rewards of our very un-childlike culture are accumulated ... we re-direct our lives to holding onto these things and increasing them. ... And it is **wearying!** ...

But Jesus promises: "Take my yoke upon you and **learn** from **me** ... and you will find rest for yourselves." But how can **anyone** who has subscribed to the wisdom of the world **possibly** learn from Jesus. In last week's Gospel He said: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life ...". How in the world can any intelligent ... educated adult take **that** seriously? How **childish!**

Well ... Jesus is telling us that we must ... return to those days of childhood ... when we imagined ... we loved and trusted and **could** believe. ... Only if we can regain some of that pure and innocent faith ... hope and love we had as children ... only then can we accept His invitation: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." ...

As we celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July this weekend ... it might be worth while to revisit that great document that **announced** ... our nation's birth ... with its references to ... "nature's God" or "men being created equal and endowed with rights by their Creator". We are certainly no longer an audacious, youthful nation struggling against all odds to survive. We now stretch from sea to shining sea! We have sent men to the moon! We are the last of the super powers! Nothing is beyond us! We are grown up! ... And it often seems like we ... as a nation ... have outgrown these childlike sentiments expressed by the founding fathers. Perhaps we have become too great and powerful to ... appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world. ... Perhaps we no longer **need** ... "a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence". ... So ... perhaps this weekend ... as we celebrate the anniversary of our nation's birth ... we might take a little time to ponder: just **how** ... is that working? ...

Donna and I miss you and look forward to the day when we can once more join with you in worship at the Cathedral. I want to thank Fr. Paul for inviting me to share this reflection and also Keith Stanfield without whose technical assistance ... this would not have been possible.