

## HOMILY for 14<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel talks about children and how God prefers to reveal spiritual messages to them. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story to tell you about.

A Sunday school teacher thought it would be nice for her children to write letters to welcome their new pastor. Here is a sampling of the results:

Dear Pastor, I know God loves everybody; but God never met my sister.

Dear Pastor, my father should have been the new minister instead of you. Every day he gives a sermon about something.

Dear Pastor, I'm sorry I can't leave more money in the plate; because my father didn't give me a raise in my allowance. Could you have a sermon about a raise in my allowance?

Dear Pastor, my mother is very religious. She goes to play bingo at church every week even if she has a cold.

Dear Pastor, I think a lot more people would come to your church if you moved it to a playground.

Dear Pastor, please say a prayer for our Little League team. We need God's help or a new pitcher.

Dear Pastor, my father says I should learn the Ten Commandments. But, I don't think I want to because we have enough rules already in my house.

Dear Pastor, I liked your sermon on Sunday; especially when it was finished.

As that lengthy cute story has revealed to us, children have an amazing faith & can connect to God in their own mysterious ways. Their faith is simple & unconditional. They usually do not bargain or negotiate with God as we adults often do. They let go of conflicts & forget about past things easily. They see things differently from the adults. They are often open to new ideas or thinking. Most importantly, they are always happy-go-lucky & not worried about tomorrow like most adults are. For they know that God & their families would look after them. Because of their simple faith, Jesus once said, "...Amen, I say to you, unless you turn & become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me." (Matthew 18:3-5) He continued, "...See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly father." (Matthew 18:10-11) Jesus evidently wants us to have the faith & attitude of children. He also calls us to treat children with much love & affection. For their Guardian Angels remain in God's presence day & night & continue to watch over them in this world. Jesus seems to tell us that children are intimately connected to God & the Kingdom of Heaven through their Guardian Angels. They remain carefree & no-worry because they believe that God & their Guardian Angels would always take good care of them. They do not try to make their relationship with God too complicated & full of dramas. That is why we should imitate them & keep our faith simple & free of conditions & dramas.

Throughout my life, I have met only a few happy-go-lucky people, who apparently have no worry about tomorrow. They simply enjoy the presence & let tomorrow worry about tomorrow. They do not let anything bother them or make them sweat bullet. It is very rare for us to find people like that in this world. For most people are worried about every little thing. They are worried what they would eat & wear. They wonder if they would have enough resources to live & retire. For these worried souls, Jesus has this message in this Sunday's

Gospel, "...Come to me, all you who are weary & find life burdensome, & I will refresh you." Jesus wants these folks to come to Him & let Him bring help & hope. He tells them not to take on future challenges by themselves & worry to death. That is why hundreds & thousands of people continue to come to church regularly & ask God to help them & give them hope.

How could Jesus refresh & help us & everyone who is weary & finds life burdensome? What would He do to free us from daily worries & future challenges? Believe it or not, we can find answers for those questions in this Sunday's Gospel. Here is how Jesus would do it, "...Take my yoke upon your shoulders & learn from me, for I am gentle & humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy & my burden light." Jesus seems to invite everyone who is weary & finds life burdensome to put Him on themselves & learn from Him. Conventional wisdom tells us that we should not put on our shoulders more yokes & burden if we are already weary & tiresome. Otherwise, we would feel overwhelmed & hopeless. However, Jesus does not want to burden us with more worries & expectations. He wants us to put on His yoke so that He would lift us up & give us a helping hand. He calls us to learn from Him & follow His way of life. That is how we could free ourselves from the vicious circles of worries & anxieties. That is how we could rise above our sinful pride & begin to rely on God for help & guidance. By having a gentle & humble heart & putting on Jesus' way of life, our souls will truly find rest & stop being worried. We will learn to act humbly & depend more on the Lord for help instead of ourselves.

As we talk about finding rest for our weary souls, I recall the life story of St. Augustine & his conversion. Like most young adults, Augustine loved a life of fun & sensuality. He joined one party after another & chased after fun wherever he could find it. He traveled around the world in search for more fun & lived life of a playboy. He did not care if his lifestyle would bring shame to his family & anger to God. He did not mind if his passion would destroy his future & lead his life to ruin. Like a blind & inebriated person, he kept on chasing after an unattainable goal, namely, as much fun as possible. He ignored God's messages for him & his mother's desperate pleas to reject that lifestyle. But, they did not give up on him. They continued to pray for his conversion & sent him one angel after another to get him to change his life. He met St. Anselm who was able to convince Augustine to return to God. In the end, Augustine did convert & got baptized. Later on, Augustine reflected on his wayward life & conversion as he wrote, "My soul is restless until it rests in you, my God."

My dear brothers & sisters, we all feel restless & worry about one thing after another. Our daily necessities & future desires might make us feel burdensome & overwhelmed at times. Today Jesus calls us to have faith of a child & put our trust & hope in Him. We must have His gentle & humble heart & follow His way of life. For that is how Jesus could refresh our lives & lift up our weary souls.