

## CHILD-LIKE TRUST

Today's gospel has two parts. The first part is about marriage, and since we have most of our children here, and they will not get married soon, we shall take the second part of the gospel that invites us to be child-like.

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My dear sisters and brothers, I would like to tell you about a little incident that took place in my life last week, and share it with you at the start of this reflection. Would one of the altar servers come here? Yes. I have got something in my hand here, something very small which all of you may not even be able to see. What is it? (Altar server: 'A stick'). Yes, a stick. Do you think this stick has got any value? (Altar server: 'No'). This stick has got no value. Do you think it would be of value to someone? (Altar server: 'No'). Ok, it may not be of value to anybody because it is so small, so brittle, it could break anytime. And so if I ask any of you children whether this stick has got any value, you and I will say it has got no value.

Last week, when I was sitting in my room, in my office, a couple came to me with their little daughter. They had come for admission to the school. When the little girl came in, I saw that she was holding a bunch of sticks very tight, very securely; she was holding the sticks as if she was holding some precious gold in her hand. And as you saw, this stick, rather, these two sticks are really worthless. But that girl was holding them tight. I asked her, 'What are you holding in your hand?' and she said, 'Sticks'. I asked her, 'Would you give me one of those sticks?' And she was ready to offer me a stick.

I have a small altar near my desk, on which is placed a statue of St. Joseph in a resting position, lying down, and beside him is Baby Jesus. I know it is not Christmastime but I keep it there because it has a lot of value and meaning. I asked this little girl, 'Would you mind giving some sticks to Jesus?' And very generously, she took out two sticks from that bunch of sticks and placed them on the little altar in front of Baby Jesus. And till today, I keep these two sticks at that altar in my room.

My dear children, when that little girl walked away, I thought to myself, 'What do we have to give Jesus?' The best thing that we can give Jesus is sometimes what we are holding on to very tightly. Many of us don't like to give up something. We hold it because we treasure it. For that little girl, these two broken sticks were her treasure that morning, and she was ready to give them up and place them in front of Baby Jesus. After she left, I began to think to myself, 'What do I have to give Jesus? Am I also holding on to something that I do not want to give Jesus? Do I trust him enough?' That little girl could only offer her sticks to me and to Baby Jesus because she trusts. She has faith in the person to whom she is giving something that was precious to her, important to her – she trusted me, she trusted Jesus.

I saw in that girl the heart of a child. In today's gospel, what does Jesus say? 'If you want to enter the Kingdom of God, you must change and become like a little child so that you can enter the Kingdom of God'. If you are a trusting child, then you can throw yourself into God's hands and he will embrace you and welcome you into his kingdom. For that we need the heart of a child – a heart that is open and generous. The little girl did not ask me: That's only a statue; why should I keep my sticks there?. She did not have a discussion with me. She placed her trust in Jesus and was ready to make a little gift of love and of trust to him. That is the heart of a child.

Jesus invites not only children but all of us to change and to become like little children if we want to enter the Kingdom of God. The heart of a child is trusting. Sometimes when we travel by train and we see a family near us, the first person we would interact with is not any of the parents but the child, because a child is trusting, open, welcoming and joyful. Jesus invites all of us—children, adults—to become like little children. As we saw at the beginning of this Mass, the children had brought three hearts of stone. They prayed for forgiveness and destroyed those hearts. And then we asked God to change our hearts and to give us hearts of flesh, hearts that are loving and trusting, so that children can trust parents, parents can trust children, and parents can also trust each other. If we trust each other, we can be child-like.

Some of the children will now pray for a heart of flesh, a heart of a child, a child like the heart of Jesus.



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