

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

September 23, 2012 9:30am and 11am

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

“...keeping up with myself”

A parent named George Durrant tells a little story about his children.

One day George took his three children to the playground at the nearby park. All three of them were on the swings.

The two older children – Devon and Katherine – had learned how to pump and swing on their own. They were going higher and higher.

Devon said, *“I’m keeping up with Katherine.”* And Katherine said, *“I’m keeping up with Devon.”*

Little Miranda wanted to try to start on her own without her father’s help, but she was barely moving. She simply said, *“I’m just keeping up with myself.”*

Getting Ahead of Others

Little Miranda’s words help us to appreciate a core lesson in today’s gospel.

The apostles are arguing about which one of them is the greatest. Each of them is trying to be above the others.

I would say that underneath all of this, each of them wants to feel valuable and important. What they really want is a sense of self-worth.

They try to attain this by comparing themselves to the others and in doing this, they are doing exactly what little Miranda does not do on the swings. She doesn’t compare herself with her brother and sister and instead just keeps up with herself.

In response to the apostles, Jesus brings a little child into the group. And with this child, Jesus gives two powerful lessons.

1. The Value of Each Person

First, Jesus teaches that each person, each of us is already valuable just in being ourselves.

In Jesus’ culture, children were at the bottom of the ladder. For example, if a family did not have enough food, the father would eat first, then the mother, and only then would the children get what was left over.

This sounds backwards to us. Maybe some of you or some of our parents held back on eating or on buying something so that the children could have enough.

Well, here Jesus says, “*Whoever receives a child such as this, receives me.*” What he’s saying is that a child and, very importantly, who that child symbolized – anyone who is seen as the last or the least in society – these persons are valuable.

Our value is inherent in our very being. So we can be like little Miranda on the swings.

We don’t have to compare ourselves with anyone and we don’t have to be above others. Each of us is already valuable.

This is why our Church teaches the value of human life from conception right through to natural death. There is an inherent value and worth in each person and in the life of each person.

This is why we are to respect human life. And this is also where – in our inherent, God-given value – this is where we find our self-worth.

2. Care for the Least

Then Jesus teaches a second lesson with this child.

Jesus calls us to care for the least or the last among us. He’s calling for a new mindset.

Once again, we are not to compare ourselves and see ourselves as better than those whose income is at poverty level or who need financial assistance. We are not to look upon them as a drain on society.

Jesus calls us to a new attitude. We are to view those in need – like the child in the story – as valuable as we ourselves are.

I sometimes think of it this way. In a hospital, the health care professionals simply treat us when we are sick.

They don’t ask if our intestinal or coronary trouble is our own fault because of eating all kinds of fatty foods and, if that’s the case, refuse to treat us. They simply treat us, help us to get better, and then advise us on how to take care of ourselves.

Well, in the same way, we are to value the last or the least in our society. We are to care for them without seeing them as below us or as undeserving.

And interestingly, Jesus is saying that again, in doing this, we ourselves will find self-worth. Our sense of self will be strengthened and enhanced in doing this.

Conclusion

So, some insightful, helpful, and maybe challenging lessons today!