

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

After having ended Easter time and having celebrated The Ascension of Our Lord, Pentecost, The Holy Trinity, and The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, we return to Ordinary Time. We return to the Ordinary rhythms of the Church calendar. In so doing, we find ourselves in the 11th Chapter of St Matthew's Gospel. Our Lord is speaking about some very basic facts and truths of the spiritual life.

St. Matthew tells us that Jesus exulted in the Holy Spirit and uttered the words: **"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, you have revealed them to little ones."**

What are the "these things" that Jesus is talking about here? He exults in the Holy Spirit about them with such intensity and with such joy. What are the "things" about which he speaks?

I would say that these "things," both hidden and revealed, are His whole spiritual program which allows the Divine Life of God to surge through us and about our participation in God's grace; our conversion and transformation in Christ. He is referring to the heart and soul of His teaching. Such is the content of the "things" that are curiously **un**available to the wise and learned—but abundantly available to little ones.

Whom does Jesus mean by **"the learned and the wise?"** In his context, he means the religious leaders and officials of His time: the scribes, doctors of the law, and Pharisees. And what is the matter with such people, that they do not get it? It's not the law, as such, or their knowledge of it. Jesus has nothing against the law. He has told us: **"I have not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it."** Jesus consistently follows the Divine Law.

So clearly, it is not the law itself that is the problem, but rather **how** the "wise and learned" hold and propagate the law. They seem always to have an eye to their own status and position. They seem to use the law as more of a weapon that always benefits them more than anyone. These "wise and learned" utilize and administer the law according to how it suits and promotes their egos.

Knowledge, especially spiritual and religious knowledge, is a wonderful thing but can be used in a variety of ways. People of kindness and generosity can use their knowledge to liberate others; to delight and inform them; to allow them to see new vistas and possibilities. We've all known a teacher, who through their knowledge have awakened us, opened up our minds to new ideas, and facilitated our being able to think in a deeper way about things.

It is the same way with great spiritual teachers who lead their disciples to the most profound spiritual realities and a deeper awareness of them. Such knowledge is liberating, enhancing, and enlivening. This is knowledge properly used.

People dominated by their egos will use their knowledge aggressively as a kind of weapon. We may have encountered them at the office, or at a cocktail party, or among your own family members. Someone, who by all accounts is, is very bright, very clever, but who uses his or her knowledge to put others down; to aggrandize the self, to win an argument—even when such a victory is harmful and embarrassing to somebody else. It is an aggressive way of being and using one's intellect. And there is something especially offensive and objectionable when religious knowledge is used in this way.

You can be the cleverest person in the world, with complete knowledge of the laws of God, but if you do not have the Divine Life flowing through you, if you use your knowledge aggressively and egotistically, you are not going to get what Jesus is talking about. The things of the spirit will remain hidden from you.

Who **WILL** get what Jesus is talking about? Little ones! Children will get it. How so? All we need do is examine the heart and mind of a child. We need to examine that which Jesus sees in children that is spiritually important for us all.

First, children do not automatically carry around, like a great burden, the expectations and hang-ups of the ego.

Consider a small child lost in play. He or she is not primarily concerned with defending and protecting the self, with keeping others at bay, with establishing position, creating a rivalry with others. The child at play does not think about what others are thinking about him or her. Such things simply do not concern this child. This child lives in a state of wonderment, innocence and openness. This child is in a place of blissful happiness and joy.

Jesus knows that with this childlike state of mind we are able to respond to the promptings of God without the interference of ego. In such a state of mind we can allow the Divine Life to surge through us without hang-ups concerning: status, position, who likes me and who doesn't, and consumed with fears about the future. In this state of mind we are oblivious to such things just like the child lost in play. We too can be lost in the field of the Lord, we can respond to whatever God wants to give us, and we can cooperate with His Grace.

One more important additional aspect of the child worth noting is that a child, rather spontaneously, looks to another for direction and guidance. A child isn't going to rely inordinately on the self for insights and perspectives—a child looks spontaneously to a parent and relies on a parent to guide and protect.

And so the spiritual person relies on God for guidance, direction, protection and insights. The spiritual person trusts in the providence and mercy of God and surrenders completely to the Divine Will. In this childlike mindset we get the "things" of God and we live as He wants us to live.

Today's Gospel ends with Jesus offering us rest. It is the rest that can **only** come to us whose hearts are childlike, unburdened with ego concerns and completely trusting in the will and providence of a loving God.

- Fr. David M. Chiantella