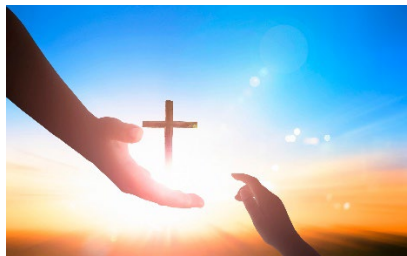


A weekly reflection by members
of the Precious Blood community

October 2, 2024

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“Amen I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 18:2)



In today’s gospel reading, Jesus holds up children as the model for his disciples. They should be like children—humble, simple, and trusting—in their approach to God. Like many of the teachings of Jesus, this is clear and direct. But how do experienced, complicated adults become children again?

Many years ago, when I was first thinking about a religious vocation, I attended a discernment weekend. A priest was giving a talk, and he looked at me and asked, “Do you consider yourself a child of God?” I think he expected a quick “Yes,” but I was so stunned by the question that I could not answer him. When I reflected on this later, I realized that it had been so long since I thought of myself as a child before God. I remembered how I had approached God with such trust when I was little and how I had once felt that I was always in God’s presence. But over the years, those feelings had faded.

Someone once wrote that the closest we will ever be to God in this life was when we were created. And then life happens. That intimate relationship—when it was just me and God — gets covered over by many things. Some of these are good, such as our identities as sons and daughters, parents, and spouses. Then there are our work identities, which have the potential to be good or selfish. And there are accomplishments and talents which can be both positive and negative. There are also unpleasant experiences that pile up—failures, hurts, and sinfulness. The work of the spiritual life is to uncover all these things, to identify them, put the good ones in their proper place, and let go of the negative ones. I’m not sure if this task is ever

finished in this life; yet this is what we strive for. By unburdening ourselves of these identities and hurts, we can get back to who we were when God created us.

Jesus also tells us that “whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.” This might be the more urgent part of today’s lesson. How often do we encounter people who are abrasive or angry? Pompous or judgmental? People who have been beaten down by life’s difficulties? Or those people we prefer to look past, like the homeless or those asking for money on the side of the road? I like to think that all these people were once happy, trusting children. And that’s how God still sees them.

May we always approach God in honest simplicity, and may we see everyone we encounter—and ourselves—as true children of God.

Brother Matt Schaefer is a Missionary of the Precious Blood, serving as Business Manager at St. James the Less Parish in Columbus, Ohio. To learn more about the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, [click here](#).

This weekly reflection is made available to all who are part of our Precious Blood family. Feel free to share it with others. Would you be willing to write a reflection? If so, please contact Vicky Otto at votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org