

Tuesday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 18:1-5, 10, 12-14): The disciples approached Jesus and said, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.

“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. What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.”

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Fr. Valentí ALONSO i Roig
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, once more, the Gospel reveals God’s heart to us. It demonstrates the emotional reaction of the Father in Heaven, in relation to his children. His most impassionate concern is for the small ones, those who nobody ever pays any attention to; those who do not attain whatever the rest of the world does. We already know that the Father, as the good Father He is, has a preference for the small children. But today we can recognize another wish of the Father that becomes

compulsory for us: “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3).

We, therefore, realize that what the Father values the most is not so much “being small”, as “becoming lowly”. “Whoever becomes humble... is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:4). This is why we can see our responsibility in this action of becoming lowly. It is not a matter of having been created small or simple, limited or more or less capable, but of not becoming proud, and remaining humble and simple. The actual importance of each one of us consists in resembling one of those small ones Jesus introduces us to.

Last but not least, the Gospel teaches us today another lesson. There are some “small ones”, closer to us than we may think, that we may have forsaken. Those that are like sheep gone astray; the Father looks for them and, when He finds them, He is more pleased because they come back home and do not go astray any more. Perhaps, if we try to look at those surrounding us more as sheep sought and found by the Father, than just sheep gone astray, we could also see more frequently and intensely God's face. St. Asterius of Amasea tells us: “The parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd teaches us that we must not rashly distrust men, nor lose heart when helping those who are at risk.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “I am a very little soul who can offer only very little things to God.” (Saint Thérèse of Lisieux)
- “What exactly does being a child consist of? In the sense of Jesus Christ, it means learning to say ‘Father’. Only if the filial existence lived by Jesus is preserved, the man can enter with the Son into divinity.”
- “At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: ‘So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish’ (Mt 18:14) (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 605)