Saturday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 19:13-15): Children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." After he placed his hands on them, he went away.

"Children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray."

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Today we are given the chance to contemplate a scene that, sadly, feels all too familiar: "Children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them" (Mt 19:13). Jesus has a special love for children; yet we, with the poor reasoning so typical of "grown-ups," often keep them from coming to Jesus and to the Father: "When they're older, if they want to, they can choose for themselves…" This is a grave mistake.

The poor—meaning those most lacking, those most in need—are the special object of the Lord's love. And children, the little ones, are indeed "poor." They are poor in age, poor in knowledge… defenseless. This is why the Church—our "Mother"—asks parents to bring their children to be baptized without delay, so that the Holy Spirit may dwell within their souls and they may enter into the warmth of the community of believers. This is clearly taught both in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in the Code of Canon Law, the highest forms of Church discipline (for the Church, like every community, must have its rules).

But no! —we often hear— "When they're older…" This way of thinking is absurd. Let's ask ourselves: —What will this child eat? Whatever his mother gives him—without waiting for the child to specify his preferences. —What language will this child speak? The one spoken by his parents (otherwise, the child will never be able to choose any language at all). —Which school will this child attend? The one his parents choose for him—without waiting for him to decide what subjects he prefers…

And so: —What did Jesus eat? Whatever His Mother, Mary, placed before Him. —What language did Jesus speak? The language of His parents. —What religion did the Child Jesus learn and practice? The religion of His parents—the Jewish faith. Later, when He was grown, and thanks to the formation He had received from His parents, He founded a new faith. But first came the faith of His parents—naturally.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "The great saints worked for the glory of God, but I'm only a little soul; I work simply for His pleasure" (Saint Therese of Lisieux)

- "We must learn to see with a child's heart, with a youthful heart not hampered by prejudices or blinded by interests" (Benedict XVI)

- "By living with the mind of Christ, Christians hasten the coming of the Reign of God, "a kingdom of justice, love, and peace." They do not, for all that, abandon their earthly tasks; faithful to their master, they fulfill them with uprightness, patience, and love." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 2.046)