

Mark 9:30-37

To Serve A Child

Jesus has come to Capernaum. He stopped at what we might call His home base before moving ever closer to Jerusalem, and ultimately to His Passion. On the way, the Apostles argued amongst themselves as to who held the highest place in the Kingdom in which Jesus was to establish and reign.

How frustrating that must have been for our Lord.

Yet he took the time to teach his apostles, the leaders of the Church to come, the true meaning of leadership. This lesson is for us as well.

The lesson is this:

Leadership does not mean power - but service.

Leadership does not mean power..... but service.

Whenever someone leads in humility and servitude, we do not call that weakness, or timidity. It is Servant Leadership.

(Short Pause)

And the measure of servant leadership lies not with adults, but with children.

To emphasize Jesus' vision of leadership, he gives us the example of serving a child.

In Jesus' time to serve someone as lowly as a child took an act of extreme humility.

Children were the least important people in ancient cultures; children had the status of slaves. People had children to serve them and provide financial security

in their elderly years. And they had many children, because the morality rate for children under 16 years of age was 50 percent.

Childhood was a precarious time in the ancient world.

(Short pause)

But who **is** the "child" of which Jesus spoke?

Who is the Christian, (the follower of Christ) to serve?

The Christian is to show service to those who have the **social status** of the child: the outcast, the sinner, the sick and the feeble.

The Christian is to offer service to **all** of God's children, regardless if they are friend or foe.

The Christian is to show hospitality to those who had become the "children" of the **community**.

To serve those like children, to place all others on a plane above yourself, is the servant leadership Christ calls us to. The example of how much we are to serve reaches its pinnacle with Christ's death on the cross.

(LONGER Pause)

Jesus used a small child as a bench mark of leadership, yet in another place in scripture we are extolled to be childlike in our lives and especially in our faith.

When we speak of children, we speak of certain virtues.

Innocence, trust and hopefulness are three that come to mind immediately for me.

Why, these three? Because, these are the childlike virtues that we loose first.

(Short Pause)

Every time someone hurts us, a piece of our innate and natural trusting nature vanishes.

Each time we hurt, abuse or in **any way use** another, we become guilty, which is contradictory to innocence.

And as trust and innocence are lost, hope is usually a casualty by default.

(Pause)

I do not come to speak to you about the evils we faced that cost us these virtues. We already know them, all-too-well.

I come to proclaim the good news that by that very death and resurrection spoken of by Jesus in today's Gospel, we have hope.

Christ has endowed Holy Mother Church with treasures that were instituted by Christ himself to bring us **to Himself**.....to allow us to be held in His arms, just as the Child in today's Gospel.

He gives these gifts so that we might have hope, regain our innocence and learn to trust in Him.

At Baptism, hope **is made possible**.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we are **restored to innocence** and we find in the Eucharist:

the true presence of Jesus, body, blood, soul and divinity in the form of bread and wine. To approach this altar in faith to receive our Lord in Holy Communion is an act of trust.

(PAUSE)

I wish to speak to all of you, but most especially our young people:

no matter what you have done, what mistakes you made, no matter how basely you might have been treated, Jesus loves you. Jesus values you. Jesus IS able to restore you to hope. You are able, in His name to reclaim your innocence and to learn again to trust others as you place your trust in Him.

He will help you to take back your purity, and will aid you in living chastely.

My brothers and sisters, we are called to leadership. Each of us has a Christian duty to lead people to Christ, and to help sustain those whom lead, be it our children, our neighbors, our co-workers. But we cannot lead if we ourselves are not humble enough to serve those we lead.

(PAUSE)

I wish to leave you today with a quote from **Princess Caroline Matilda of Wales** Who later became Queen of Denmark in 1767. She wrote a very simple prayer that has captured the importance of virtue in servant leadership. She prayed:

O God, keep me innocent; make others great!