



ST JOSEPH SYRO MALABAR CATHOLIC MISSION SAN DIEGO

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REV FR SONEY SEBASTIAN SVD

Sunday Readings and Meditation

October 8 Sunday Sixth Sunday of Elijah-Cross-Moses

Great in the kingdom of heaven Mt 18:1-9

Today we come to the fourth of the five discourses which are the distinctive characteristic of Matthew's gospel. This one focuses on the Church, the Christian community, and in particular the relationships between its members.

Today's passage begins by asking the question: Who is the greatest in the Kingdom and, by implication, in the Christian community, which is a sign of the Kingdom? Jesus answers the question very simply by putting a child in front of his disciples. To become the greatest is to become a small child.

Why? Children have their qualities and their defects. They are intellectually and emotionally immature. But children have some precious qualities which they often lose as they grow up. They are born free of prejudice, and they are totally open to learning. It is this quality that we need to enter the Reign of God. To be totally open and free of prejudice when it comes to listening to God. To be fully teachable and malleable and flexible. Then we are ready to receive everything that God wants us to have and to become everything God wants us to become. Furthermore, to welcome a person who has these qualities in Jesus' name is to welcome Christ himself.

From that the Gospel moves on to another related consideration. It moves from children to the 'little ones'. These little ones are not just children but the weaker ones in the community and they may be adults. But they are the ones who can very easily be led astray by the bad example which others give. And there are severe penalties for doing this.

This is emphasized by the parable of the lost sheep. God is compared to a shepherd who has lost just one sheep out of a hundred. When he finds it again, he is happier than over the other ninety-nine which have not strayed. Such, the gospel concludes, is the desire of God, that not even one of the 'little ones' be lost.

How terrible, then, if one of us is responsible for someone being separated from God forever! One feels that it happens quite a lot in our society and in our Church

First Reading: Deut 10:12-20 Second Reading: Isa 33:2-10 Third Reading: 1 Cor 14:26-33a