

Saturday's Gospel: God's Favorites

Gospel for Saturday in the 19th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 19:13-15*)

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Commentary

After having listened yesterday to Jesus' teaching about the indissolubility of marriage, today we see some children who are brought to Him. Once a man and woman are united forever in marriage, children appear on the scene, the fruit of their union. The evangelist does not indicate who brings these children but we can presume it was the parents. For Jesus' fame was growing. He had healed the weakest, including children. So it is easy to imagine parents bringing their children to Jesus so that he would bless them, and by laying on his hands, or just by touching them, he would protect them from diseases and the power of the evil one.

The disciples think they have the authority to prevent this. But the

Master doesn't allow them to do so, since He is the Way to reach the Father. For as He will tell them: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (*Jn 14:6*). Children find in Jesus the best way to discover their divine filiation. At the same time, adults – especially parents – are called to facilitate this encounter, so that they too rediscover that they are God's children: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me" (*Mk 9:37*).

It is moving to see Jesus surrounded by children, smiling at them, asking their names and age, instructing them to be good children of their parents, good brothers and sisters, and telling them about his Heavenly Father. It was both an earthly and heavenly scene at the same time: a clear manifestation of what the Kingdom of Heaven must be on

earth, and a reflection of what that Kingdom will be like in the next world for those who on earth have behaved as God's children. Saint Josemaría told us: "Don't forget that our Lord has a special love for little children and those who become as little children" (*The Way*, no. 872).

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