

GOSPEL*Matthew 11:25-30*

Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

A REFLECTION OF POPE FRANCIS*9 July 2023*

Today the Gospel contains a very beautiful prayer of Jesus, who addresses the Father, saying, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" (Mt 11:25). But what things is Jesus talking about? And then, who are these "babes" to whom such things are revealed? Let us reflect on this: on the things for which Jesus praises his Father and on the "babes" who know how to welcome them.

The things for which Jesus praises the Father. Just before this, the Lord had recalled some of his works — "the blind receive their sight [...], lepers are cleansed [...], the poor have good news preached to them" (Mt 11:5) — and revealed their meaning, saying that these are the signs that God is at work in the world. The message, then, is clear: God reveals himself by liberating and healing the human person. Let us not forget this: God reveals himself by liberating and healing the human person, and he does this with a gratuitous love, a love that saves. This is why Jesus praises his father, because his greatness consists in love and he never works outside of love. But this greatness in love is not understood by those who presume to be great and who fabricate a god in their own image — powerful, inflexible, vindictive. In other words, those who are presumptuous are not able to accept God as Father; those who are full of themselves, proud, concerned only about their

own interests — these are the presumptuous ones — convinced they do not need anyone. In this regard, Jesus names the inhabitants of three rich cities of his time: Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, where he had accomplished many healings, but whose inhabitants remained indifferent to his preaching. For them, his miracles were only spectacular events, useful for making news and feeding gossip. Once passing interest in them was over, they archived them, maybe in order to occupy themselves with other novelties of the moment. They did not know how to welcome the great things of God.

The little children, instead, know how to welcome them, and Jesus praises the Father for them: "I bless you," he says, because you have revealed the Kingdom of Heaven to the little ones. Jesus praises him for the simple people whose hearts are free from presumption and self-love. The little ones are those who, like children, feel their need and are not self-sufficient. They are open to God and allow themselves to be amazed at his works. They know how to read his signs, to marvel at the miracles of his love! I ask all of you, and even myself, do we know how to marvel at the things of God or do we take them for passing things?

Brothers and sisters, if we think about it, our lives are filled with miracles. They are filled with deeds of love, signs of God's goodness. Before these, however, even our hearts can remain indifferent and become habitual, curious but not capable of being amazed, of allowing themselves to be "impressed". A closed heart, an armoured heart, is incapable of being amazed. To impress is a beautiful verb that brings to mind photographic film. This is the correct behaviour to have before God's works: to take a photograph of his works in our minds so that they may be impressed in our hearts, and then developed in our lives through many good deeds, so that this "photograph" of God, who is love, becomes ever brighter in us and through us.

And now, let us all ask ourselves: In the deluge of news that overwhelms us, do I, as Jesus shows us today, know how to stop before the great things of God, those that God accomplishes? Do I allow myself to marvel like a child at the good that silently changes

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the world? Or have I lost the ability to be amazed?
And do I bless the Father each day for his works? May
Mary, who exulted in the Lord, make us capable of
being amazed by his love and of praising him with
simplicity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/
Homily?



Head: Jesus praises the Father for revealing the Kingdom to “mere children.” Pope Francis says the little ones are those who know their need and are open to wonder. What attitudes or assumptions can make it harder for us to receive God’s truth with that childlike openness?



Heart: Jesus invites the weary and burdened to come to him and find rest. Where in your life do you most need to stop striving, stop carrying things alone, and allow Christ to carry the weight with you?



Hands: Pope Francis asks whether we still allow ourselves to be amazed by God’s goodness. What is one way you can intentionally notice, remember, or give thanks for God’s work in your life this week?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.