

27th Sunday – Ord Time – Year B

How many of you have seen the TV quiz show called, “Are you smarter than a 5th grader?” ...Well if you haven’t seen it, let me give you some background...On the show they ask adults questions that they would’ve learned in 5th grade or before...For example:Name the first four presidents of the US?...How many sides does a heptagon have?...Who invented the cotton gin?...If you have trouble with any of these be glad you were never on that show...because many of the adults on that show end up losing when they can’t answer all of the questions...and when that happens, they have to look straight into the camera and say , “My name is Ron and I am **NOT** smarter than a 5th grader.” A little embarrassing.

As I was reading the 2nd part of today’s Gosp., it struck me that the idea of that quiz show could be applied to what Jesus was saying about faith – more specifically – childlike faith...So, I’m going to call my homily, “Do you have more faith than a 5th grader?”...We are going to look at this childlike faith Jesus was referring to when He told His disciples.: "Let the little children come to me,...for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these....Anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."...It is the kind of faith most of us once had...but many of us tend to outgrow...Maybe because as we grow older we become more cynical and we get influenced by false teachings and the harshness of life...I’ll bet not many of us have a greater belief and trust in God than a 5th grader does.

Jesus was teaching His disciples that it was people who have faith like a child who will inherit the Kingdom of God! ...He held up a child and basically said, “Learn from this child.”...Jesus wants us to learn from children the kind of faith God wants us to have... So, what does this mean exactly?...What is childlike faith? ...Well, there are a number of things that come to mind...**First of all**, children believe whole-heartedly that God is real and God can do anything He wants....Children know that God is all-powerful...They may not comprehend why they know it...they just do...and this belief is backed up by the Bible: Jer 32:17 says that nothing is impossible for God...Jesus in Mat 19 when His disciples couldn’t see how anyone could be good enough to be saved, assures them that “with God all things are possible.” ...Child-like faith believes God can do anything,... but for some reason we begin to question this as we get older.

It’s funny because we have no trouble believing God created the vast, marvelous universe. ...created the magnificently complex human body...No trouble believing that God can make the trees grow, the rain fall, the sun to shine,...but we’re not that sure when it comes to the every day things of life....Can God really help me deal with my boss , or save my marriage,...or overcome this illness? ...And how many of us have trouble believing that God changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ?...About half of us according to most surveys...Is God powerful enough to do these things? ...Child-like faith, and the Bible, and experience says, “Yes. without reservation, yes, yes, He can!!!”

God has power we cannot imagine...When He created the world, He didn’t have to work that hard. ...He did one thing: He spoke a word...and it was done...Wouldn’t you like to have that awesomely some power?...To speak things into being,...or to look at something and be able to recreate it? Some of you would look at your old car and say, “Let there be a BMW.” Or you would look at yourself in the mirror and say, “Let there be a slimmer figure.” Or you would look at your husband and say....well, uh, lets not go there.

Anyway, everything around us should remind us of an awesome creator God- one that a child-like faith tells us can **do** everything.....Child-like faith also believes that God **knows** everything. ...A child understands that you can’t hide anything from God...and once again, it’s grounded in Biblical truth...Heb 4:13 says, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight... Everything is

uncovered and laid bare before His eyes." ...Ps 147 says that God's understanding has NO limits. None. There is nothing He does not comprehend"...1 Jn 3:20 puts it simply, "God knows everything."...Now when the Bible says God is all-knowing, it's not saying that God is very smart, that He would do really well on "Are you Smarter than a 5th grader?"...What it's saying is there is nothing in this world, nothing in the past, nothing in the future that God does not know.

Kids know that, but for some reason, that understanding fades as we grow older, and that's too bad because when we grasp the sheer magnitude of God's knowledge and understanding,...and then realize that in that vast, infinite realm of knowledge, God knows me personally – intimately - and cares about me personally...little old me,... that's absolutely overwhelming.

King David in the 139th Psalm talks about God's intimate knowledge....He says, "Oh Lord, you have searched me and you know me.... you know when I sit and when I stand... you know my thoughts from afar...you are familiar with all my ways.... Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord." ...Then David sums it up by basically saying,... "Even though you know all about me, you still care...you know all my ways, all my secrets, all my sins, and yet you still care about me"....They say a good friend is one who knows all about you and loves you anyway...I want to tell you this today, God knows all about you, every thought, every deed, every sin, everything....and He loves you anyway.... Children know that... Children believe that.... We grownups need to rediscover that.

OK, moving to my last point,...Child-like faith also believes that **God is everywhere**...Children believe that...they understand that wherever you **are** God is... Wherever you **aren't** God is...They know that simple yet powerful fact....In that same 139th Ps, David tells God that wherever he goes, he can't get away from God...Up, down, near, far, he says, "God you are there."...Kids know that, and we need to be reminded of that because it has a very important impact on our lives....First of all, it means God is with us in the bad times...When we're going through that trouble or trial, we need to remember that God is there with us...not off somewhere else taking care of someone who is worse off...Jesus told us that to God, everyone is important. ...That's something we especially take to heart on Respect Life Sunday,...that **every** life is sacred to God...and therefore **every** life – **every** life - should be sacred to us.

There's an old saying that, "There's a broken heart in every pew."...Looking out on this congregation, I'd say that's an understatement...It may be health... It may be finances...It may be relationships...It may be addictions,...And while there may be times when you think no one knows or cares,...the truth is that God does...and He's with you through it all....There's a fascinating verse in Ps 56 that says, "Lord, you put my tears in a bottle. you record them in your book."...It's as if God is saying, "I'm saving your tears. I want you to know I didn't miss them. I was there."...Life is tough, sometimes very unfair...sometimes tragic....but God will work things out for the good...Do I understand how? No.... Will I someday? Maybe, maybe not...But child-like faith trusts that God knows my pain and will get me through it.

Since God is everywhere, then He's also with us in our victories...our successes. He's there when we do good...He records it all, takes it into account....Jesus told us God sees what we do in secret and will reward us for it...I kind of like that. Don't you?...Maybe it's a "guy" thing...We men like to be recognized. You know what I mean?...My wife does 90% of the work around the house, but when I do something I want to be stroked..."Honey, I put away my socks. Did you notice?"...Maybe it's a weak part of human nature, but we want to know if anybody saw the good thing we did...Truth is...God always does.

My friends, what I'm saying is we need to get back to that pure understanding of God, to see God for who He is, a God who can do everything – who knows and sees everything – who is

with me everywhere I go – a God who knows and cares about every facet of my life...who knows about the good in my life and the sin in my life, and has provided a way for my salvation through Jesus Christ....But we also have to remember that He is a God who gives us the freedom to choose Him or reject Him...to choose Jesus Christ or reject Jesus Christ...Child-like faith knows that God gives us chance after chance to choose the right way...and that if we refuse to follow that way, we will have to face the consequences... Child-like faith knows that....Child-like faith chooses the right way.

So, after having said all that, I can look straight into the camera now and say...My name is Ron and I am **not** smarter than a 5th grader when it comes to faith in God. But I'm learning. How about you? AMEN.