

Today's gospel concerning children follows quite nicely from the verses which immediately precede it. Prior to what we hear in today's gospel, some of the Pharisees approached Jesus and asked whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus responds by going back to the beginning – to the creation account in Genesis – where God unites man and woman in such a way that there is an unbreakable union between them.

Moses, on the other hand, allowed divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts. After upholding the permanence of marriage, Jesus then turns to children, the fruit of marriage. Whereas the disciples found children to be a nuisance, Jesus sees in them both innocence and simplicity. It is to them, Jesus says, that the kingdom of heaven belongs.

From today's gospel, we get the sense that children have a natural desire for God, which unfortunately can be thwarted by adults (sometimes by their own parents) in preventing them from coming to know the Lord.

I remember a few years after college when I was working in downtown Minneapolis. Every now and then my boss would talk about her children. One time she remarked, "I provide a good home for my children – giving them what they need and want – but I feel bad because we don't practice any religion. We're not even giving them an chance to practice their faith."

Essentially, she was admitting that she provided for the physical needs of her children, but neglected their spiritual needs. In some sense, like the disciples, she was preventing her children from coming to know Christ. Parents must provide for the bodily *and* spiritual needs.

Here at St. Therese, we are most grateful for those of you who bring your children to Mass and teach them about Jesus and His Church. I know that your children can be a bit squirrely now and then. On a personal note – which may give you some comfort – my brother and I were just awful at Mass when I was a little guy. We had to sit all the way in the back because we would crawl all over the pews. I think we almost caused my mother to have a nervous breakdown at times.

Nonetheless, God bless you for bringing your children. In doing so, know that Jesus continues to bless them today in that He nourishes them with His Word and the Eucharist. May the Lord richly bless those of you who have brought your children to Mass because you have given them the opportunity to know and love the Lord Jesus.