

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 4-5, 2020, Cycle A

We hear Jesus pray to God in our passage from Matthew's Gospel: "I give praise to you, Father Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones." Several thoughts come to mind for me. First of all, I presume by "these things" Jesus means mysteries of salvation – the mysteries Jesus came to reveal. Another thought that comes to mind: Why has God hidden "these things" (the mysteries of salvation) and revealed them to "little ones"? The Greek word employed by the Gospel writer of Matthew for "little ones" is "nepioi," literally meaning "infants." Are all adults considered wise and intelligent? Does God mean to shut the wise and learned out of the Kingdom of God? Does infants – little ones – mean literally children alone, or does Jesus mean all who are considered by this world simple and little ones? And if Jesus does mean all those who are considered "little ones" by the world, what makes children worthy models for those who receive God's revelation? After all, also in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus teaches that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is it that children ("little ones") have that the wise and intelligent lack in Jesus' estimation? What qualities of children might Jesus be thinking of? Children are vulnerable, open, trusting, reliant, weak, and must depend on those with power to protect and care for them. Children are open vessels ready to receive. Apparently, Jesus sees children ("little ones") modeling the necessary trust, dependence, and reliance that He sees are needed for any one of us to receive the revelation of salvation. The reason the wise and the learned can be shut out of the Kingdom of God (have these things hidden from them) is the wise and learned are tempted to false reliance on themselves. If I am so wise and learned that I have all the answers, I need nothing that faith or a God has to offer me. In the end, God's way of holiness can be open to all – the little ones and the learned and wise – to all, whether we are young, poor, frail, elderly, wise, or lacking intelligence, because God's way must be available to all if it is the way of salvation! "Little ones," then, are humble ones.

"Little ones" are those who are open to the love of God – who are poor in spirit – and realize they do not have all the answers and are open to letting God come into their lives. Jesus is asking us to lay down the burden of believing that we must have all the answers and rely on God, like little children, to become what God intends us to be.

In humbly accepting the message Jesus offers us, He promises that his yoke is easy and his burden light. Easy and light, because, we don't have to pretend to be self-sufficient anymore. Easy and light, because, once we take the yoke of the Gospel upon ourselves Jesus promises to work right alongside of us. Jesus using the agrarian metaphor of a double yoke for two oxen uses an image all his contemporaries would have understood. He, Jesus, is the other oxen alongside of us helping bear the yoke of His Gospel. Thus, the yoke we will find easy, and burden light, having thrown off the single yoke of putting on a front of self-sufficiency, and having answers I really don't have. Like Jesus, we would have learned to be meek and humble of heart.