

Let the Little Children Come to Me By Fr. Matthew Habiger OSB



Jesus loves children. He said, "Let them come to Me". He took them in his arms and blessed them. Jesus loves children, because he loves persons. We recall that the only reason God created the entire material universe was to provide a home for persons, like you and me, and the children, for our brief passage of years here.

Jesus said about children, "to them belongs the Kingdom of God", because they are so close to God, and are so open to, and dependent upon, God. We all recognize in a baby a special innocence, a certain freshness from God. Perhaps that is why everyone finds babies so loveable.

There is much confusion today about babies and children. Many couples do not understand God's Plan for their fertility. God knows exactly how many children he wishes to send to each married couple. He wants us to participate with Him in the creation of new persons. That is why God designed us as bodied persons, male and female, sexual and fertile. Procreation is a continuation of creation. God wants married couples to cooperate with him in the passing on of life to the next generation. God wants married couples to open their spousal love to both the goodness of love, and to the goodness of life. God alone gives life, but he wants couples to discern with him, through prayers, the number and spacing of the pregnancies, always using only morally good means.

The child is God's greatest gift to a married couple. For sure, a baby brings many challenges and inconveniences to a marriage, but the love and joy that the baby brings into the family is inestimable.

There is a lot of confusion about children in our society. The dominant mood, or trend, in our society goes like this, "A boy for me and a girl for you, and then we quit". Ten years later after that decision, one of the spouses gets sterilized. Today, 40% of Catholic couples are sterilized because they were duped by this ideology. It is not entirely their fault, since most Catholics have never heard anything about the moral evil of contraception and sterilization from the pulpit, where they would naturally expect to hear God's Plan for marriage, spousal love and family proclaimed.

In my prolife work with Human Life International (HLI) throughout the 1990's, I worked in over 55 countries, many of them in developing countries. The only countries where I heard the argument, "We can't have more than one or two children because we cannot afford them", was in the affluent first world. How paradoxical! Children are the greatest gifts, and the greatest asset parents can have, but in the most affluent countries they are considered a liability.

I delight in seeing so many of our young faculty here at Benedictine College with exuberant large families. [This Wednesday, at the annual picnic that we monks provide for the College Faculty and their families, on the east lawn of the Guest House, you will see what I mean.] I thank God that these couples understand how God wishes them to cooperate with him in sharing love and life with the next generation. May the goodness, love and joy that is so obvious in their families be an inspiration for all who see and know them.

"Let the children come to Me".