

Sermon on Children – Holy Cross, Dunn Loring – June 5, 2011 – Jamie Samilio

The Gospel for today is complicated. It has many lines that seem to be telling us something that is not concrete, simple, or easy to comprehend.

Jesus says: “All mine are yours and all yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them.” Jesus is going to the Father – yet the Father is in Him.

What does this all really mean? I think it means that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one, and that God is in all of us. I think it means that we are all Children of God, and we see and experience God through the relationships we have with each other – brothers and sisters in Christ, one body, and a promise of salvation. Amen!

What does Amen mean?

A couple weeks ago, Martin Smith from St Columba's - preached at the confirmation service about his experience with a child's response to a church service.

A little boy was sitting with his Mom in church, and each time during the service that the congregation said Amen, he would turn and high five his Mom. Finally she asked him why he kept high fiving her. He said, well in sports, that is what we do when we get picked, we say “I'm in” and we high five.

Amen – I'm in! Really I think that may be the best definition for the word I have ever heard. Turn to the person next to you right now, and give a high five and say, “I'm in!”

I am musical by nature, and when I first read the Gospel for this morning a song started playing in my head. It was *On Children* by the group Sweet Honey in the Rock. I was sitting next to Mary our organist and choir director, and she told me that the song was actually from a poem by Khalil Gibran author of *The Prophet*. Well as any good theologian would do, I read the Gospel in context -- reading a little before and a little after what we read from the lectionary today. What I found was fascinating.

A few lines after our text for today was a line that must have inspired Khalil Gibran to write the poem. John 17:16, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.”

My subconscious is much smarter than my conscious, and must have made this connection. I want to share some of the poem *On Children* with you this morning, because I think it really speaks to the Gospel lesson.

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of life -- life's longing for itself.

They come through you, but they are not from you, and though they are with you, they belong not to you.

(Who has teenagers?)

You can give them your love but not your thoughts.

They have their own thoughts.

You can house their bodies but not their souls.

For their souls dwell in a place of tomorrow.

These are not your children, they are God's children, just as we all are God's children through Christ. And that place of tomorrow -- I think it is heaven and our promise of salvation. "We're in." That is what I think the meaning of the Gospel is today.

But wait, there's more...Today is Assentation Day.

Did you ever have a balloon and let it go? You stand there and look up and watch until it is so small, you can no longer see it, yet you keep looking up. What would you do if one day, Fr. Wes – the leader of your church -- started floating up in the air, rising into the sky? It would be pretty unbelievable right? I imagine, like the balloon, you would continue to just stare into heaven in disbelief. In our reading from Acts, the angel asks, "Why are you standing here looking into heaven?" Sometimes we have information, and still are not sure what to do with it or how to act upon what we have seen. Jesus had glorified God, and to glorify means to act.

So, now that we know we belong to God, and we have a place Jesus has prepared for us in heaven, how do we act on that information? How do we figure out what actions we should take that will glorify God?

Sorry, I have no answers, just more questions.

When you have done something that you probably should not have done, what questions does your Mom or dad or teacher or other adult ask you?

Robert Fulghum – one of my favorite authors – wrote "Everything I Need to Know I learned in Kindergarten." He has a new collection of short stories out, and in it he refers to the questions that are deep and profound, and that have the most impact on our lives as, "The Great Mother Questions."

The questions sound different depending on how you ask them. Robert lives close to an elementary school and there is a fence between his yard and where the children are dropped off for school. This means he cannot see the drop off, but he can hear it. One day, he overheard one such drop off when the mother opened the door to the car and exclaimed, "What in God's name have you done?"

Had the child emptied his lunch box looking for the cookies, or perhaps used an indelible marker she did not now he had to put his initials on the back of her seat, perhaps both – kids are fast. But the question, if asked out of context has a different impact and can help us figure out what to *do* once we realize that we are Christ's own forever. "What in God's name are we doing?"

The other Great Mother questions: "What on Earth have you done?" I think this next one is for the outreach folks, "What will you think of next?" And, I really the best help in the last one, "Who in the world do you think that you are?"

I hope you all come to share my answer to that last question.  
I am a child of God, and "I'm in!"

Amen