

Chaplain's Bulletin October 6, 2024



Dear Folks,

For the last three weeks in our Sunday Gospels Jesus talks about children. When the disciples want to know who is most important, Jesus brings forth a child (Mark 9:30-37). When the disciples act out of jealousy toward someone not in their group, Jesus speaks in very strong terms about the seriousness of their example affecting children (Mark 9:36-48). When Jesus is asked about marriage, the next thing He talks about is receiving children and how “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” and how we need to learn from them (Mark 10:2-16). I think He’s trying to get our attention.

I have just finished a book called “Pro-Child Politics” by Kathy Faust. It is a series of chapters on various issues in which our society is sacrificing the well-being of children for the desires of adults. The chapters are written by experts in the field, and they are well written and heavily footnoted, so even if you don’t wind up agreeing with all the things that are said, this is a very important addition to the conversation, and it will be worthwhile wrestling with the ideas.

This week Jesus brings together the question of marriage and welcoming children. There are currently two views of marriage available in conversation. There is the relational view, that sees marriage as affirming the relationship of the couple (or thurple?) based on their romantic feelings for each other that they label love. In this view, marriage can be anything you want. This is the commonly held view today, and often assumed to be the only one. The other is the conjugal view of marriage, which unites men and women to one another, and to any children they might create, which was the foundation of most of human civilization. It understands marriage as recognized by the government, ideally life long, sexual in nature, exclusive in nature, only two people.

There is a presentation on Formed.org “How to Talk about Marriage and Same Sex Unions” by Trent Horn. There are the books “Getting the Marriage Conversation Right” by William B. May and “What is Marriage?” by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P George that make the case for the conjugal view of marriage, and give evidence that this is the best possible situation for a child to grow up in. I would also suggest reading “Brave New World” by Aldous Huxley (written in 1931, eerily prophetic). It describes a dystopian future in which family has been replaced by government, and children are a manufactured commodity. Also see “The Anxious Generation” by Jonathan Haidt, about the effects of smart phone use on childhood.

How often are children seen as a commodity to be produced, and accessory to one’s lifestyle?

It is important to prioritize the well-being of children not only because they are so vulnerable, but because they are going to be running things someday when we are in the nursing home. The more they are able to learn virtue, empathy, emotional regulation, deferral of gratification, a sense of right and wrong and similar things, the less violent and more flourishing our society will be. Notice this is not ruled by their feelings and desires, but a deeper sense of the good.

Where do we go from here?

Blessings,
Fr. Jim