

Being like little children

Imagine the scene. Jesus and his disciples are making their way along the road to Capernaum. Being a few paces away from the others, Jesus is not part of their conversation. Nonetheless he picks up the vibe: the disciples are squabbling among themselves. So, when they arrive at their destination, Jesus confronts them: "What were you arguing about along the road?" Attempting to cover their shame, the disciples say nothing.

Before advancing the story, let us put it in context. Just a few days earlier, Jesus had taken Peter, James and John to Mt Tabor, some thirty miles from Capernaum, where he was shown in all his glory. Then, on the way down the mountain, they came across a boy possessed by an unclean spirit. The disciples try unsuccessfully to heal the boy. Jesus says, "Bring him to me," and the boy is healed. The disciples reaction: "Why could not we heal the boy"? Their concern is not with the boy, but with their own power.

Moreover, on the mountain and along the road, Jesus has been telling the disciples that the Son of Man was to suffer and die, but after three days would rise again. Understandably, too many things are being said and done by Jesus. The disciples are confounded, confused. Their response is to fear Jesus: "They did not understand what he said and were too afraid to ask". So, what do they do? They start debating about which one of them is the greatest! We can picture the scene. Peter argues he has been appointed leader of the group. John announces his special

intimacy with Jesus. His brother, James, known for his fiery temperament, portrays himself as the most courageous.

Philip reminds them it was he Jesus first approaches about feeding the five thousand. But, says Andrew, it was me who found the boy with five barley loaves and two fish without which there would be no miracle. Judas harangues them all: without financial planning (his special gift), the discipleship mission would collapse. At this point, Jesus has had enough.

And so he calls the Twelve to him and says simply: "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last and servant of all".

Although the disciples should immediately relate this to Jesus' earlier teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount, he knows all too well people with ears so often cannot hear! So Jesus, ever the true teacher, takes a little child, symbol of vulnerability, telling them they too must become like "little children" if they are to learn true discipleship.

We are not told how the disciples reacted. Hopefully, they began to realise the question of "who is the greatest" is very much the wrong question.

The questions we need to ask are: how can I become like a little child; how can I best learn to serve others; how can I put my ego aside in order to be an instrument of God's love for others in our world?

Gerard Hall SM
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MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH

510 Riddell Road, Glendowie 1071

Parish Office: 575 9296
Parish Priest: Fr John Dunn
Dcn Mark Rivalland: 021 482 555
Office Hours: Mon - Fri: 9.30am-12pm
Wednesday: 1.30-5pm
E-Mail: office@glendowiecatholic.org.nz
Parish Website: www.glendowiecatholic.org.nz
Parish Administrator: Karla Nobre Milosevic
Pastoral Worker: Maureen Keenan (Home)5754354
Redemptorist Website: www.cssr.org.au



25th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 September

Dear Parishioners,

Another week of Lockdown level 4!! I hope that you are doing ok and the pressures and hardships are not getting too much. One dad who — like many — is balancing working from home, children doing online schooling, and the general demands of life in his bubble, said they were all getting to the stage of cabin fever.

Also, for some, lockdown has taken its toll in terms of isolation and loneliness, and personal and psychological stress. Hang in there! We can all look forward to the Delta virus being eradicated, and our progressing down the scale to Level One. Hopefully we will be in Level 3 this week, and Level 2 soon after. I append below some of the phone numbers that the Diocese has sent to us. Talking with someone helps. Being listened to helps even more. Please take the risk of calling.

And this is for all of us: PLEASE continue to ring one person per day. In regard to our parishes at Level 2, I have a number of things to share with you.

First of all, all the Bishops in the country have issued letters saying that, at Level 2, their diocese would not celebrate Sunday Masses. I know this will be very disappointing to many.

Bishop Pat has written a "Pastoral Letter on Liturgy Protocols For Covid Delta Alert Level 2", on 14 September. While there will be no Sunday Masses across the Diocese under alert level 2, we may begin weekday Masses, under the strict Level 2 protocols laid down by the Government.

It is clear that all the bishops have taken account of the limit of 50 persons under level 2. They have also taken very seriously the ease of transmission of the virus. It becomes infectious very quickly, before the person even knows they are infected, and it is transmitted through microscopic aerosol particles which can be inhaled at some distance. As long as the virus is untraced and in the community, all gatherings place people at risk.

Bishop Pat has had the extra burden of knowing that the Covid Delta virus is now only in Auckland. For the good of the country as a whole, he cannot afford us to cause one outbreak. Our sacrifice is an act of social and civic love. In the meantime, we continue to make do with Mass online and keep up our family prayer at home.

If you have not been vaccinated yet, I urge you to do so as soon as possible. Bishop Pat makes this the key positive point of his letter. Under level 3 we can open our churches for private visits and prayer.

Of course, we will begin weekday Masses immediately under level 2. Our two Parish Councils will meet by zoom this Monday evening to work out the practicalities under the conditions laid down by the Bishop. These include:

- We must have no more than 50 people present
- We must have 2 metre spacing between worshippers;
- We must manually sign in or scan a QR code when entering the church;
- The wearing of masks is strongly recommended (just as when going to the supermarket or other such venues)
- No Holy Water in fonts;
- No physical contact at the Sign of Peace;
- No Communion from the chalice;

We will communicate our arrangements immediately after our Parish Councils meet on Monday. Second, this week is Social Justice week. I am informed that Caritas (the NZ Bishops' charitable organization) has been sending donations to Catholic Relief Services on the ground in Afghanistan and in Haiti. You can contribute via their website www.caritas.org.nz.

Further, there are some people who can do with a hand in our communities. You can contribute directly to your parish bank account, which you can find on our website. Please just put COVID in the code box.

In the bigger picture, social justice involves thinking about our social responsibilities for the common good, about our planet, the environment, and the suffering of too many people in our world, broken by social and political dysfunction and war.

Pope Francis' vision in Fratelli tutti, is to remind us that we are all brothers and sisters in our world. He has some interesting comments about the first wave of the pandemic.

Third, I also add a letter addressed to me about a particular need:

The owner of the house we are currently renting has given us notice. My family of 2 adults, 1 teenager and I are looking for a 3 to 4 bedroom house for rent. We're hopefully looking for something at or below \$700 a week as our current rent is just under that, and will us also to afford the necessities throughout the week. *(Please contact Maggy Hamilton)*

Lastly, I received some beautiful letters from year 2 students and their teacher, Miss Olivia Melbourne, at St Ignatius school. They sent me letters, photos, drawings, and told me all sorts of things they were doing in lockdown, (anyone tried cartwheels with no arms??) but they all wanted to get back to school to see their friends. Thank you all! Hopefully our Parishes can continue to put into practice Jesus' teaching about children in this Sunday's Gospel.

Lots of love and encouragement from
Fr John Dunn

Name

Women's Refuge
Shine
Alcohol and Drug Helpline
Oranga Tamariki call centre
CADS
Narcotics Anonymous
Alcoholics Anonymous
Lifeline
Youthline
Samaritans
Depression Helpline
Suicide Prevention Helpline

Contact Details

0800 REFUGE
0508 744 633
0800 787 797
0508 FAMILY
09 845 1818
0800 628 632
0800 229 6757
0800 543 354 or free text 4357
0800 376 633
0800 726 666
0800 111 757
0508 828 88 65

Name

Fairway Mediation Services
Linkpeople (homeless)

Contact Details

0800 77 44 20
0800 932 432

Foodbanks

- South Auckland Christian Foodbank: (0508) 242 643
- Vinnies Auckland, Onehunga: 815 6122 or (0800) 680 090
- MUMA: (0800) 686 232
- Work and Income: (0800) 559 009