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Uniting Word & World

For Sunday, September 20, 2015

Embrace the Smallest

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/092015.cfm>

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

James 3:16—4:3

Mark 9:30-37



Long before he became the cardinal archbishop of New York, Timothy Dolan was the rector of the North American College in Rome. He used to give regular talks to the seminarians, which were collected in a very good book called *Priests for the Third Millennium*. In one of the talks, Cardinal Dolan quotes a retreat conference given by the Passionist Scripture scholar Barnabas Ahern.

Father Ahern asked: what do you suppose was Jesus Christ's favorite virtue? Was it faith? Was it hope? How about charity or justice?

All of those are contenders. But Father Ahern had something else in mind. Christ's favorite virtue, he suggested, was humility. He made a persuasive argument.

Repeatedly in the Gospels, Christ chose the most humble. He chose the sick over the healthy... the weak over the powerful... the poor over the rich. The Gospels offer a reassuring message for all of us who

feel unworthy, or fall short; they offer this blessed hope: Jesus often found *more* among those who, in the eyes of the world, seemed to be *less*.

And in this Sunday's gospel, we see this again. To settle a dispute among the apostles over who, in fact, is the greatest, Jesus put before them the most inconsequential person in the room: a small child—a figure of perfect trust, and simplicity, and need.

“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me,” he said. “And whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.”

To receive God, he was saying, open your arms. Embrace the helpless, and needy. Seek out the smallest. To receive God, don't look above. Look below.

This seems to be a message [Pope Francis has made a cornerstone of his pontificate](#)—and again and again, he has modeled that kind of [generosity of spirit](#) toward the small, the forgotten, the marginalized. We can expect to see more of that, I imagine, when he arrives in America in a few days for his historic visit to Washington, Philadelphia, and New York. Analysts are predicting what [message he might be coming to convey](#) to the United Nations or to Congress. Will he challenge the rich and powerful? Press for more attention to the plight of immigrants? Call for mercy and dignity toward those who are most helpless, such as the unborn? [Stay tuned.](#)

But this much is certain: he will continue to embody the message Christ imparted to his disciples all those centuries ago. In gestures, words and deeds, he will challenge America—and, indeed, the world—to embrace those who are the smallest and, in doing so, embrace God.

Dcn. Greg Kandra

PRAYER

Prayer

Father, your truth is made known in your Word.

Guide us to seek the truth of the human person.

Teach us the way to love because you are Love.

Jesus, you embody Love and Truth.

Help us to recognize your face in the poor.

Enable us to live out our vocation to bring love and justice to your people.

Holy Spirit, you inspire us to transform our world.

Empower us to seek the common good for all persons.

Give us a spirit of solidarity and make us one human family.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

—From USCCB, prayer based on Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 encyclical, Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth).

NOTICES

DIOCESAN FISCAL MANAGERS CONFERENCE, September 27–30, Atlanta

The Diocesan Fiscal Managers Conference (DFMC) will take place in Atlanta from September 27–30, 2015. The keynote speaker this year will be the Most Revered Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta. LPi will be attending DFMC as well, so if you're attending, be sure to stop by our booth to say hi! More information is available at <http://www.4lpi.com/live-events/events-and-conferences/>.

CATECHETICAL SUNDAY—September 20, 2015

The USCCB offers resources for parishes and families to celebrate Catechetical Sunday on September 20. The theme for this year is “Safeguarding the Dignity of Every Human Person.” For more information and parish resources, visit: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/index.cfm>.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

In preparation for the upcoming World Meeting of Families — Philadelphia 2015, LPi has created a cover for parishes to use to encourage prayers for its success. The cover is available at no charge via LPi's [Art & Media Portal](#). Current customers can find more versions by logging in and searching keyword "WMOF."

Visit the LPi website for information on services and publications to build a vibrant parish.

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