

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, August 12th, 2018

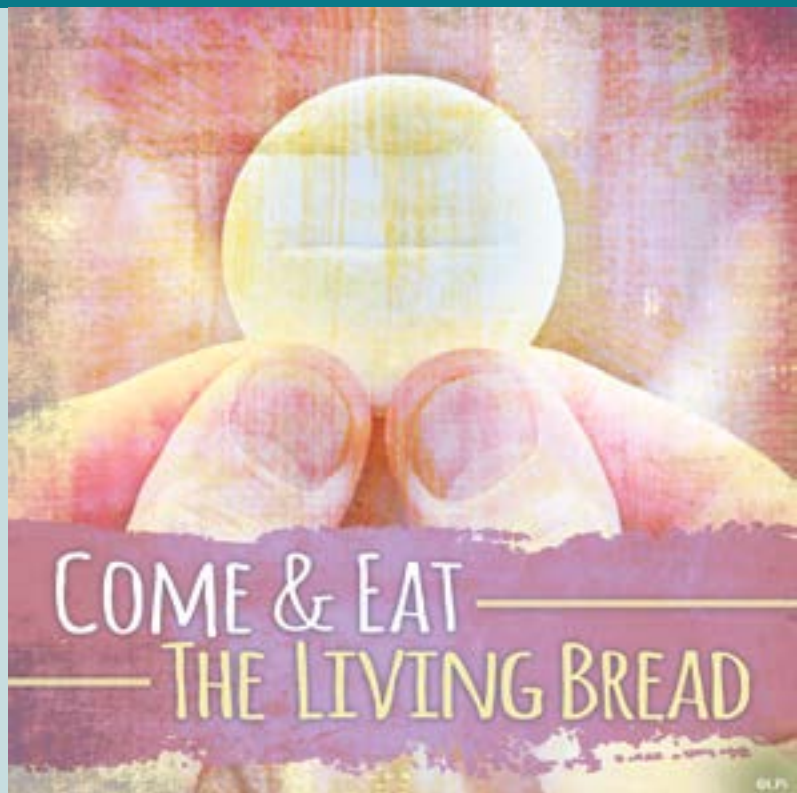
The Faith of a Child

Written by Angie Windnagle

1 Kings 19:4-8

Ephesians 4:30—5:2

John 6:41-51



Having grown up with a brother — and now having three boys of my own — roughhousing and wrestling have always been a constant in my life. The chaos and pandemonium is a normal, everyday part of our lives, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Mostly, because behind the yelps and squeals, there is bonding and connection taking place. With each round of pulling and bumping at each other, I see relationships growing between brothers and between father and sons.

Last weekend, my husband was playing around with the younger two while the oldest was having a snack. By the time the oldest made it to the ruckus, my husband had strained his neck and was unable to continue playing. Heartbroken, my son pleaded for just a few minutes of wrestling with Dad, to which my husband replied, "Sure, buddy. Just give me two minutes to rest a bit." Now, if you're a parent, or are around parents, you'd realize that was most likely code for "let's move on from this until you forget about it because I'm way too tired to keep going." Which, for the sake of his neck, providentially did happen.

The great thing about kids is their honesty. The bad thing about kids is their honesty. If I've hurt my kids' feelings in any way, I am sure to hear about it. And that's exactly what happened that evening with my husband. My son, heartbroken at the memory of a promise to wrestle, fell into a ball of tears because he felt left out and because Dad so easily forgot the promise he made. He saw right through my husband's attempts to defer things and called him out on it.

On the surface, this can feel burdensome. We are tired, we are in a rush, we are on the go, and it feels like we have more important things to do than split hairs about a tiny thing like a fleeting hurt feeling. But under the surface, this is actually a child's greatest strength in many ways. It's the charism of youth to spot inauthenticity. They see things how they really are. As adults, we become impressed by facades. What is on the outside is what we judge. If you stand tall enough, we will believe you are tall. But kids see the stilts. If I'm pretending, they see right through me.

This weekend at Mass, we continue the Bread of Life Discourse from John. The striking thing to me is the language used. Though oozing with deep theological meaning, the words Jesus uses are plain and to the point — he is the Bread of Life. Without him, we will not live. There are no facades. He is who he says he is: the Son of God the Father. Yet those near him “murmur” and discuss among themselves what this might mean. They are fully adults in their hearts in front of a God calling them to become as children. They can’t see past the surface of appearance, yet they won’t take his words at face value.

It calls to mind the incredible darkness being uprooted in the Church today as scandals and abuses are being brought to light. The demands of the Gospel and truths of Scripture don’t lose power when they are trampled upon through sin. Just the opposite: they show us how mighty and powerful they truly are. The readings this week are demanding more of us as Christians in the world today. They hearken us to that charism of children to see straight to the heart of things and blot out inauthenticity. We are being called to shed light boldly by being even more dedicated to the Eucharist, to the Church, and to the call we’ve all received: to live transparently a life in Christ, even if those we have looked up to do not.

When we feel discouraged and ready to give up, we look to Elijah in the First Reading who was beaten and lowly. At his lowest moment, wishing for death, God came down and fed him to prepare him for the mission ahead. When we are tempted to believe sin has corrupted the Church, we proclaim during the Psalm that the Lord is still good. There is no evil in goodness, no scandal, no hidden closets. And when ready to curse the darkness, St. Paul directs our hearts away from anger and reminds us that there is power in the name of Jesus. Since we belong to him, we ought to imitate him, even if some of those who preach in his name do not.

And finally, the Gospel brings us all back to the most magnificent and mysterious truth of our faith: Jesus is truly present to us in the Eucharist. There is no other way to the Father. And there is nothing and no one that can change this truth. Whether the times of the Church bring us consolation and peace or destruction and corruption, Jesus is still with us in the Eucharist. My only job is to proclaim that truth, to be ready to give my life for that truth, and to bring anything to the light that would compromise that truth. In other words, to live my faith more radically, I need to take lessons in simplicity and authenticity from my children.

Angie Windnagle

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PRAYER

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from Christ’s side, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee
From the malicious enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That I may praise Thee
with Thy saints and with Thy angels
Forever and ever
Amen.*

— Anima Christi