

# Sermon for Sunday, Week 25 of Ordinary Time, Year B

2021

**Gospel: Mark 9:30-37**

## *First. Christian childlikeness.*

Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection – which we remember every time we celebrate Mass – stands at the very heart of our faith and life as Christians.

Like Christ, **we are called to pass from death to life** – to *new* life, **the life of grace and virtue.**

St. Maximus of Turin, a great homilist of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, spoke about **our Passover as involving a passage from age to infancy** (cf. Sermon 58).

Like our Lord in the Gospel, he saw **little children** as being symbolic of the **new life** of Christians.

## *Second. The spiritual and moral profile of the childlike soul.*

**Christian childlikeness hates evil.**

It not only refuses to commit sin, but disdains even to be associated with it, insofar as is possible.

It is **patient and inclined to bear wrongs** without retaliating. But if it is longsuffering and mild, this is **the result of virtue**, not powerlessness.

The soul that is childlike through spiritual rebirth is **familiar with Jesus**; it is like the child in today's Gospel reading, around whom **Jesus placed His arms.**

It **knows Christ**, and in this knowledge it finds constant strength.

It learns to live in a state of **constant remembrance of its Saviour** and Lord. In this way the world never has the last word; it doesn't sway the soul from its purpose.

It proceeds calmly towards a heavenly reward – which is nothing other than perfect loving **union with God**; this is what the soul has **always desired.**

## *Third. A threefold garland.*

If we remember what St. Maximus said, that our Passover involves a passage from age to infancy, we can begin to see **how we come by the blessed innocence** and simplicity of Christian childlikeness.

Jesus said: "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and **three days** after he has been put to death he will rise again".

**On the first day He suffered and died.**

**On the second He lay in the tomb.**

**On the third He rose again to new life.**

Our passage from an old way of life to newness of life is similar.

**On the first day we need to die to ourselves**, that is, to any sinful inclinations. Our wills need to be trained to avoid evil and choose the good. This is what spiritual writers call **purgation** – the purification of our hearts.

**On the second**, having acquired a degree of self-mastery, we are able to **think about Christ with new clarity** and learn about His mystery through quiet prayer and reflection. This is **illumination** – new understanding.

**On the third, we attain to a share in Christ's new life** as Victor over sin and death. Because it is *His* life that is in us, controlling our thoughts and actions, everywhere we turn and in all things we find Christ, and the soul delights in the peace and joy of **union** with Him.

We could describe these elements of the spiritual life – purgation, illumination and union – as a **threefold garland**, that adorn and prepare the soul for heavenly joy as part of the Church, God's own Bride.

**Let us ask for the prayers and help of our Lady.** She made Christ Himself an infant. She can and will assist us to become more like Him, to the praise and glory of God, and our great happiness, now, and in the world to come.

*Praised be Jesus and Mary!*