

"Suffer little children" begs close consideration

By JIM RYAN
Herald Special

25th Sunday
in Ordinary Time
Mark 9:30-37
Sept. 22, 1991

This Sunday's Gospel reading begs close consideration, it's the one that goes, "suffer little children." (The word suffer is taken from the King James Version and means to bear or support. The word in Greek means to welcome or receive someone gladly.) Read the passage. You'll find it on your bookshelf, in the ninth chapter of Mark's Gospel, verses thirty to thirty-seven.

The Gospel is about three possibilities:

1. Being a big person.
2. Being a little person.
3. Being a Gospel person.

"Okay, so what are big people like?"
Well, they're mostly "wanna be's". They "wanna be" big. For most that means driving a big car, living in a big house, going to a big church, and getting the wave of recognition from those who aren't as big. It means hiring a secretary to protect yourself from a world which might undermine your confidence; hiring a lawyer for the same reason; and hiring a publicist to explain what you mean. It could also mean getting a pay raise when the rest of the public servants get none.

"Fine, I get the point. What about the little people in the Gospel?"

Well, they're like ... I know, read Michael Harris' book, *Unholy Orders: Tragedy at Mount Cashel*.

ADIGRESSION

Michael Harris must be the reincarnation of Mark, the Gospel writer. There's never any



Religion
and
Reality
by
Jim Ryan

doubt in his book who the bad guys are. He names them. There's no difficulty finding the good guys either.

His book is like a parable, if you like, in the Marcan style, where the good, the bad and the crucified are clearly drawn. There are even people in Harris' book who are just like the disciples in Mark's Gospel. They never learn a thing, are always off the mark, missing the point, walking with Jesus, but only concerned about their status in the community.

BACK TO THE POINT

Michael Harris draws an ugly picture of what it's like to be a little person. He's clear. A little person, in fact, the littlest person, is young, perhaps only six or seven years old. He has no protector, or big person, for whatever reason, to stand between him and the

ugliness. He can't pay his way, and has nobody who can pay it for him.

The horror grows. Harris' example of the little person is worse than Toronto's worry about little Kayla last summer. In Harris' story, the little people are hurt by big people, not by other little people. (Harris calls them the Establishment Quartet: the police, the Social Services, the Justice System and the Christian Brothers.)

Harris' indictment is clear: the Establishment Quartet conspired together to protect themselves. (Their duty, ironically, is to protect the little people.)

"Frightening! Can I get any relief?"

Listen to a description of the Gospel person. I'll give three examples.

1. Sunday's Gospel. Jesus takes a child and wraps his arms around him.
2. The Documents of Vatican II. All baptized people are equal, clericalism is a sin, and the hierarchy is downplayed. We are the "People of God" travelling together toward the Kingdom.
3. The Winter Report. It's a three volume report on the child abuse cases in Newfoundland. The third volume suggests changes for the future, changes that could go some way towards solving the problem of big people

and little people. The problem is finding it. Can you believe it? The only way that you can get a copy of the Winter Report is by ordering it from Mrs. Linda O'Keefe in Newfoundland. Her address is: Box 37, St. John's, Nfld., A1C 5H5.

Phone: 1-709-726-3660. Total cost, including postage, is \$41.00.

And I'm not just suggesting the Winter Report for Catholics. It's for all churches. None of us can claim to have understood the lesson of this Sunday's Gospel.

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"In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." Psalm 56:11
Faith in God can eliminate the fears we face. Let's put our total confidence in God.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Psalm 55:22
The Lord can and will take you through that crisis. He loves you.

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