

Easter 2 – April 12, 2015

Text: 1 John 1:1 – 2:2

Theme: "Growing Up In Jesus"

It seems a little patronizing don't you think? The way John speaks to us? Calling us "little children." Most of us don't think of ourselves as little children, but that is what we are. If it were not so, we would not make so many childish mistakes. The Christian faith is not an all at once proposition. Justification is all at once. That is to say that the moment the Holy Spirit works faith in you in Baptism or through the Word, you are completely justified. You are made completely right with God. Your place in paradise is secured and there is nothing left to do. However, sanctification is a different thing. Sanctification is a process of being made Holy.

When justification happens, you are like a newborn baby. When a baby is born, he is fully born. It is an either/or proposition. Either you have been born or you have not. But having been born, the baby is in no way grown. That's why the argument over life beginning when the fetus is viable is so ridiculous. I know some teenagers who are not viable yet. Having been born, we still need many years of nurture and guidance and growth.

So John, an old man when he writes this epistle we have before us today, speaks to us as little children because I suspect that even

the most mature of us barely makes it to spiritual adolescence by the end of our lives. Our faith has to be cared for and nurtured for many, many years. If it were not so, if our faith were fully mature, would we ever worry? Would we ever want to get even with someone? Would we ever covet another's possessions? Would we ever be arrogant or prideful? So growth is the order of the day.

St. Peter encourages us by saying,

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." So that is what we do. We satisfy our souls with the Word of God and his Sacrament. And we invite others to do the same. This is called low Sunday in the church because as you might notice, the people who were all here last Sunday are not beside us today. These are our first targets. If you saw someone last Sunday, but you don't see them today and know that you may not see them again for some months, go after them. They may be ones who are being distracted from filling up on pure spiritual milk.

When Noah was a toddler, he only wanted to eat Coco Puffs and chicken nuggets but it did not seem good to Dänya or me to raise a child eating only Coco Puffs and chicken nuggets. So we began a campaign of trying to introduce Noah to new food. Every single night was a negotiation that rivaled Middle East Peace Talks.

You think Iran is a tough customer? Let President Obama try Noah! We negotiated every night. "Noah you have to eat 3 bites of broccoli because you're three and then you get 3 bites of chicken nugget. Dinner hour felt like an Arms Treaty Negotiation most nights for a quite a while. But the rewards were worthwhile and now Noah eats everything...literally, we did our job way too well. Noah eats EVERYTHING. Most parents have done the exact same kind of thing because children need to be taught what food is good and what food should be avoided or even abandoned. So, I am proud to say that today, Noah has grown from a toddler to a young man and we are very proud of him on many levels.

That person who was here for Easter but now will not be back until Christmas may be a spiritual toddler. Do we just ignore him and hope he gets some nourishment? Would we let a chronological toddler live on Coco Puffs and chicken nuggets and just hope he survives? Go find that spiritual toddler and lead him back here so he can eat, so that he can grow in faith as he consumes the pure spiritual milk of God's word and his holy body and blood.

That's the way we grow the Church. We don't care so much how many pews are filled but we do care that there are too many people who are not being properly fed with nourishing spiritual food, and we have more than enough food and plenty of room to

feed them. If you looked out your dining room window every night and saw little children starving to death on the sidewalk, would you just close the curtains and hope they went away or would you do something about it? I know each and every one of you would do whatever you could. You would share whatever you had to feed those children. Do likewise for the spiritual little children in our community who are starving spiritually. John says in our epistle,

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” We were spiritually starving children too and someone fed us. Maybe it was a parent, a neighbor, a relative, a teacher or a pastor, but someone fed us the pure spiritual milk of God’s word. Now, so that our joy might be complete, go feed others. You have the bread of life. Go feed the children.