

Childlike Easter

“I’m here!”



Little Matthias at first seemed to make his presence known at Easter morning Mass – winning every heart at the same time. Moments later, he said ever-so-gently but clearly to all: “Hello. Hello. Hello.” Three times. The Trinitarian dimension to his announcement was unmistakable. He was heralding the news of the day – and our lives.

Mass was with the Sisters of Life. My incessant mentioning of them has something to do with them being just about the best game in town, so to speak, when it comes to changing the culture into one that welcomes life – instead of throwing away our most vulnerable and insisting on breaking the hearts of their mothers, doing the most intimate violence to their very bodies and souls.

Matthias’ brother Dominic couldn’t keep still until he wore himself out and fell asleep in the arms of one of the sisters he loves. This annual Mass gathers as many of the sisters as can be spared for their own rejuvenation. It also serves as a reunion of the sisters with mothers and children and families who have benefitted from their love. The joy and the love overflows with alleluias.

The priest who was celebrating this Easter morning was a living thanksgiving. Being with the sisters for the Triduum was so obviously life-giving for him as he preached to them about their Bridegroom. He rejoiced in every “Alleluia” and then again with bells and songs from the sisters. During the

homily, he remarked on the beauty of it all. He declared children are just about the greatest Easter proclamation. He used the word "mystery" speaking to all this joy and wonder, and Matthias was back at it, as much as his dear mother tried to get him to observe the appropriate silence: "Mystery!" Matthias repeated, as if to underscore for the rest of us the necessity of faith.

The Easter declaration is unlike any other declaration. It doesn't make us independent but rather resplendent in the glory of God. Did Matthias know what he was saying? We sure did. This season is beyond all of our management skills. This season is about conversion and only the innocence of a child can herald the wonder with which we are called to respond.

Matthias was relatively quiet until the consecration. Once again, he declared his presence. I don't know how to tell you, but it was so clearly Jesus Christ he was speaking of. He seemed already to know what can take we grown-ups a lifetime. This Real Presence that had been gone from us in the Holy Saturday silence had returned. And we can never be the same. Matthias reminded us to be childlike. He reminded us with such great purity, even as so many just like us were slaughtered during Easter Sunday Mass in Sri Lanka.

There was a moment, too, after Mass. One of the sisters encouraged Matthias to greet the priest. He wasn't interested until the Spirit seemed to move him a few minutes later, when the priest was in the sacristy. "Where's Father?" he said with some surprise. "Here I am," the priest said, appearing in the sanctuary to greet the precious boy. Matthias was delighted, making a face of satisfaction that seemed only to confirm what he already knows: That he is loved by a heavenly Father.

And then there was a final precious moment. Easter-egg-hunt time was about to arrive. But first, Matthias looked at one of the sisters, who was kneeling with her head down in prayer. He said to her: "I love you." That was everything. That is the

Easter message, and it's one that the people slaughtered Easter morning in Sri Lanka reciprocated with their lives. We are an Easter people, and love is all we're asked for. That little boy on Easter morning shows us the way.

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