

Homily121116

## FROM THE MOUTH OF BABES

(God often speaks in and through the little ones in our midst. We must learn to listen and reflect upon their words.)

Each year I receive homemade Christmas cards from some of the school children. I would like to read some excerpts from a few of them.

Dear Monsignor McHenry,

Christmas is almost here! I hope that your Mass goes splendid! (I'm guessing that 'splendid' is a fifth grade vocabulary word.)

Dear Monsignor,

I hope your Christmas is great! I also hope that your New Year is pretty good too!! (Afterthoughts work).

Dear Monsignor McHenry,

Merry Christmas! I hope that you won't have the tree incident again this year... (I can't remember a 'tree incident' but obviously she can. I'll have to be careful)

The next card had a very Advent look to it, the cross with a purple drape over it. On the front were the words, "He loves you a lot." Inside was this message, I just want to wish you the best Christmas ever and let Jesus fill up your heart... (That card stopped me dead in my tracks. Talk about 'out of the mouths of babes.'

The next card had this on the cover: The Lord Jesus thanks you for serving him, Monsignor McHenry. And inside was this message: I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and the LORD is very happy with you."

Dear Monsignor,

Thank you for continuing to be an inspiration for me and helping me when I need it. Even if you don't realize it, you help me a lot. (Sometimes a truth sneaks up on you when you aren't looking.)

Dear Monsignor,

The present here is very small just like Jesus was, but full of love. It gives great joy and shows great love. So that we know that this holiday is about love and sharing what we have with others. Merry Christmas and God bless you, Monsignor McHenry

Dear Monsignor,

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! But the most important thing ever is that Jesus Christ is born. And I will never forget that.

Humorous, profound, insightful thoughts. Some of those cards just made me sit up and take notice. "The Lord loves you a lot." "The Lord Jesus thanks you for serving him." My friends, these are not just the words of fifth graders, nor are they their words just to me. These words carry

too much truth, too much meaning just to be for me. They are from the Lord on the words of little ones. They are prophetic words. They are words that I am to hear and to allow to flow into my heart to nourish me and change me. But they are words to you as well. The Lord is speaking to me through these children but to you also through their words. “Let Jesus fill up YOUR heart.” “He loves you a lot.” “Jesus thanks you for serving him.”

Earlier today I baptized a new born baby boy who has already begun an acting career by being cast as the Baby Jesus in our Live Nativity last week. He was so exquisite, so attentive, so fragile, so resilient so capable of bringing out the best in everybody around him. He is just a little one right now but he will grow and he will make friends and go to school and have opinions and learn to speak and walk and run and play sports. Jesus came to us like that so that we would not be afraid of him. And yet some were. It didn't make sense but some were afraid of that baby. Some are always afraid of babies.

Christmas is coming! Just two weeks away. We celebrate that day when the Savior is born and the angels who proclaimed his birth to the shepherds had a simple message: “Do not be afraid! Do not be fearful! I bring you glad tidings!” My friends in Christ, there will always be reasons to be afraid in this world. There will be loneliness and broken dreams. There will be violence and hatred. There will be separation and missed opportunities. There will be sickness and death. We cannot avoid these things but we must not give in to them.

The grace of God has appeared. His name is Jesus. Truth has been re-established. God's Word has become flesh. Love has been let loose in our world. What cannot happen has happened. But we have learned that God IS love, which means that God can best be seen—in love, in all kinds of love. Christmas manifests all manner of the dimensions of love—sacrificial love, steadfast love, giving and forgiving love, selfless love, receptive love, holy love, silent love. Loving presence. His presence. He is here. He is here. It makes me think. The baby Jesus is how God came to us. As a little baby. Why that way? Because that is how all of us come into the world. And we are not afraid of those little babies. We are drawn to them. We love them. And at the center of the manger scene is the baby Jesus. The manger is a symbol for me and for you. The question is: Is my manger empty or is there a child there? Is there the Christ child there? Is your manger empty? Are you running on empty? Will you allow the little One of God to be placed at the center of your heart today? Will you let Christ nourish you with his own body today, in Holy Communion? No matter what the past has been Christ wants only to be food for us. That is the glad tidings, the truly good news of Christmas that draws close to us. Let the Lord be your food—and do not be afraid.