Fisher-Price Simple Faith

HOMILY TRANSCRIPT | Timestamps removed; lightly edited for readability

I believe it was Robert Fulghum who wrote, “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” And you know, there’s a great deal of truth to that. After all, in kindergarten we learned to stay within the lines, as well as to share and play well with others. At that age, one sees the world with a childlike innocence. You did things that were good, and you tried very hard to avoid those things that were bad. To coin another phrase: “Fisher-Price simple.”

And that, my friends, I think, is what our Gospel is about today: keeping our faith childlike, keeping it Fisher-Price simple. For a better understanding of what’s going on in our Gospel, let’s take a step back and look at the players for just a moment.

The Sadducees were a sect of Jews active in Judea during the Second Temple period. They tended to be identified with the upper social and economic echelon of Judean society. As a whole, the sect fulfilled various political, social, and religious roles, including maintaining the Temple. By silencing this group, our Lord was sure to raise the hackles of the Pharisees.

Now, the Pharisees were, at various times, a political party, a social movement, and a school of thought during the Second Temple period. Their beliefs became the liturgical and ritualistic basis for Judaism. The Pharisees claimed Mosaic authority for their interpretation of Jewish laws, while the Sadducees claimed priestly authority. Pharisees also tended to receive the backing and goodwill of the common people of the time.

It’s from this position that they think they can set a trap for Jesus. After all, the commandments are all equally important. If they can just trip up Jesus here, they will do two things: one, expose Jesus as a heretic; and two, set themselves up as being superior to the Sadducees. And so the Pharisees set their trap.

“What’s the greatest commandment?” they asked. And Jesus takes that bait and runs with it. In order to understand the Bible, one must approach it through the eyes of love. The Ten Commandments were a litany of “thou shalt nots.” Many scholars look at the Sermon on the Mount, which is in Matthew chapter five, as a kind of reversal of the “thou shalt nots,” replacing them with the “blessed are you” statements.

Jesus, who once again responds to everything from a position of love, responds to the question posed with a very simple answer: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest. “And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The whole Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments. It’s so simple. It’s so innocent.

Yet we often fail to follow it. As Catholic Christians, in many ways, our focus is to be humble, to be watchful. It’s a lesson not easily learned. We can turn to the example of the saints and the beautiful witness of our patroness, St. Margaret Mary, whose feast we celebrated last Sunday. We learn from her humble, attentive love for all those around her.

Being humble means we do not come across as being holier than thou. Like Jesus, we should strive to live our faith and walk our talk, one step at a time, out of love. Yet, at the same time, we are watchful for opportunities to serve our Lord and to shine his light on the dark areas of our lives and those of society.

Now, if we’re to take this seriously, one way we can do this is to look at who are the most vulnerable members of our society, those who have no voice, no representation.

According to one research study, over one million of these lives were snuffed out in the year 2025. This took place with little fanfare or attention in the media: the lives of these children who were aborted here in the United States. These are the children who were aborted not because of some life-threatening or medical condition, but because they were unwanted.

Abortion, my friends, in many ways has become a means of birth control, the murder of innocent life. Now, hear me when I say this: If you have had an abortion, please know that the Church is here to help you heal. We’re not here to condemn you, or to berate you, or to put you down. If you have an unwanted pregnancy, or know someone who has one, please know that there are options to abortion.

As a chaplain with Winnie Palmer Hospital, I sat with a family from Kansas who flew into Orlando to adopt a baby. It was one of the most beautiful moments as I watched this father hold his son and look upon him with tremendous love. Over the course of the next three days, every time I rounded that infant’s room, that father was holding his son.

You see, my friends, there are life-giving options out there, and your Church is here to help you find them. And abortion is only one aspect of respect life. As Catholics, we believe that life is sacred from the womb to the tomb.

We stand against capital punishment, euthanasia. Like Christ, we must stand with those who are marginalized and have no voice. You see, life is sacred, for we are created in the image and likeness of the Almighty. And there, my friends, lies the challenge.

If we claim to be a people of the Gospel, if we are a people who say we love God with our entire being and our neighbors as ourselves, how do our lives bear witness to this? How do we witness this childlike, Fisher-Price simple faith?

My prayer is that each of us will remove the blinders we have in place and look for those who are marginalized, oppressed, and in a spiritual drought, and share with them the living water, the Gospel of Christ. May we become the hands, the feet, and the voice of Christ in our community. May we remain humble and watchful. Amen.