

HOMILY FOR THANKSGIVING AFTER CANONIZATION OF SAINT ANNE-MARIE RIVIER

Santa Maria Maggiore Major Papal Basilica, Roma
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There are three things that we adults are afraid of in life. First, we are afraid to be small. Second, we are afraid to trust. And, third, we are afraid to suffer.

Some of us are afraid to be small. Some people are afraid to be treated small. Some people are afraid to go down from being tall to being small. Do not be afraid to be small, because God chose to be small. When God came to us, He chose to become an infant so that it would be easier for us to carry Him. When God comes to us in the Eucharist, He comes to us under the guise of a small host, small enough to be taken into our mouths. Our smallness allows us to be the crib and food basket of God. And if you put God into anything small, that small thing becomes great. Isn't God then truly great? Therefore, we adults should not be afraid to be small, to be created small, because if we put God in us and allow Him to enter into our small size, that is an act of greatness. To be small with God like a little child is to be great. To be simple is to be great. This is the lesson we derive from our first reading where Paul writes to the Christians living in Corinth about the small or little ones, who are the weak, who God will use to shame those who are boastful, who think too highly of themselves. Saint Paul writes that God will "reduce to nothing all those that do count for something."



We adults are afraid to trust. Children are trusting. We adults are very suspicious. Unfortunately, as we grow old, we become all the more careful. We become all the more suspicious. We become all the more cautious, and we get the

urge to countercheck from other sources if the person to whom we plan to assign our trust is truly deserving of our confidence. Perhaps, we have been hurt in our life so many times in the past: this individual deceived me, lied to me, betrayed me; therefore, I cannot trust anyone anymore.

We adults cannot but trust God, because God is ever faithful and His love is irrevocable. This is the lesson we can draw forth from our Psalm where the Psalmist entreats God saying, "I live my life by your truth.... My trust in Yahweh never wavers." Here, the Psalmist asks God to protect him from sinners, the wicked, the hypocrites, and violent men.

We adults don't want to suffer. We adults already know that we are not born into this world just to suffer. God created us to be happy. But, listen to this, fellow adults -- pain or suffering is a gift nobody wants. Jesus never intended to look at pain or suffering as an end in itself, but as a means. If He had His way, Jesus would let the cup of suffering, i.e., His Passion and death on the Cross pass

Him by, and not go through, nor endure it. But He accepted it as a consequence of God's will for humanity and creation, which is to bring about eternal life and share it with us and the world. Aligning and uniting His will to the predetermined and irrevocable will of His Father, Jesus carried His cross and brought meaning to suffering. The cross of Jesus then becomes salvific. His suffering on it now has a meaning.

We adults carry many different crosses in our lives and we carry them every single day. But, unless we know the meaning of carrying of our daily crosses, we will rather drag them than put them on our shoulders. So, our suffering now has meaning not because we seek suffering or pain, but because we know that necessary suffering is ultimately liberating and redemptive.

So now, we understand why Jesus in today's Gospel praised His Heavenly Father for revealing the things of the Kingdom to the little ones and childlike and hiding them from the learned and the wise. It is because the little ones and the childlike are not afraid: they are not afraid to be small. They don't complain being small. They are not afraid to trust. They have complete trust in their parents, especially in the Heavenly Father who is our common Parent. And they are not afraid to get hurt. They are curious of things, more bold and courageous than we adults who have learned to be very careful, cautious, and calculating.

Saint Marie Rivier was not afraid of being small, even if she stood only at a height of 4 feet and 4 inches. In her smallness, God has made use of her, to manifest God's great goodness not only in

her life, but more so in Marie Rivier's ministry to the poor. Saint Marie Rivier was not afraid to trust. She confided totally in God which made God's work through her possible. Saint Marie Rivier was not afraid to suffer for the physical pain that she experienced even as a little child when she suffered in an accident. She was even not initially accepted when she applied to join the Sisters of Notre Dame in Pradelles due to her poor health. But she was undeterred.

Through Saint Marie Rivier's intercession in behalf of the little girl named Angel Marie Vier Degamo who hails from my home Diocese of Tagbilaran, this little angel was miraculously cured of her hydrops fetalis, a life-threatening condition. Doctors tell us that the survival rate of hydrops fetalis is low and is usually not treatable during the mother's pregnancy. We believe that by the grace of God, Angel Marie's cure can only be attributed to Saint Marie Rivier's intercession.



Smallness or simplicity, trustworthiness, and courage are the assets of the little ones and the childlike like Saint Marie Rivier. Jesus wants us to rediscover these lifelong virtues as adopted children of the Heavenly Father. Being so, we stake our all on God.

The past we leave to God's mercy; the present we leave to God's care; and the future we leave to God's providence. With everything in God's hands, with everything in the palm of our Heavenly Father, eternal joy surely awaits us in heaven.

