

Barbarians
Pastor David Keating
St. James, Chicago

Each society faces a problem about once in a generation. Periodically, the civilizations that we live in are invaded by barbarians. These barbarians enter our civilization with no knowledge of our language or our customs. They want to live by their own rules and norms. They kick, claw, and bite those who should be in authority over them. Those who encounter these barbarians must wonder to themselves if our culture and society can possibly survive if these people are to eventually run our country and government going forward. Yes, every few years we are invaded by barbarians... and we call them children.

It's not the fault of children that they're barbarians when they're born! Part of our job is to raise them into responsible citizens and help them become the people they are meant to be. Very rarely would we hold up a child and say that this is the model of what we should become. And yet, that's exactly what Jesus tells us. He flips the script on the childish disciples who are arguing amongst themselves about what it means to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus tells them, "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3-4

What is Jesus getting at? Kids can't do much by themselves. They are dependent upon the parents who love and take care of them. The same is true for us in our spiritual lives. God invites us to call on Him as children would call upon their dear father. He tells us to rely on Him as a very present help in the midst of danger. He holds nothing back from us, but rather blesses us with His Word, Sacraments, and promises. This is exactly why Jesus concludes this teaching by calling to mind the parable of the lost sheep. Our Good Shepherd seeks out that one lost sheep; and we recognize that we are that lost sheep! May we, with childlike faith, humbly trust that our Good Shepherd seeks us out in order to rescue us from sin and death so that we might experience His life and grace within the arms of the Church.