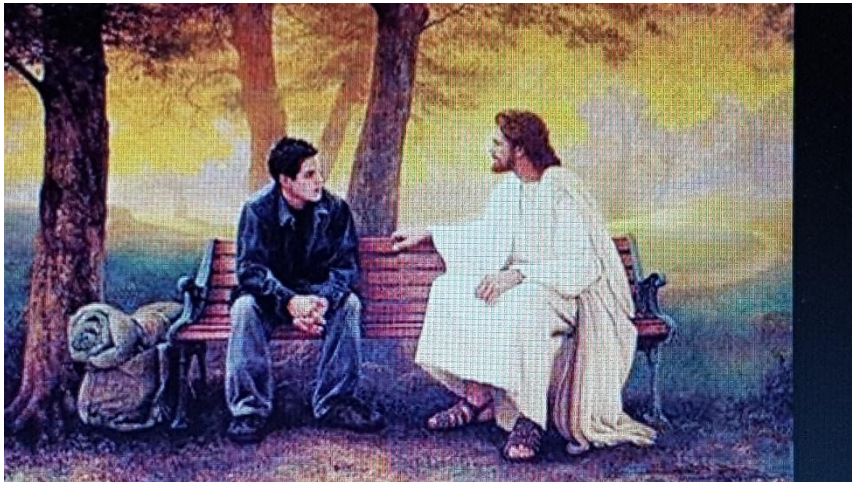


Reflection on Parenting for Mothers Union Wave of Prayer June 2020



Who are “little ones” in the eyes of Jesus? Children? The unfortunate? Minority groups?

In **Luke 17.1-2**, Jesus says to his disciples: “Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble.” They sound like harsh words, and Jesus did use hyperbole, the fashion for exaggeration among public speakers of his time, or in Luke’s Greek background. We need to remember to pray for those who, we know from the media, have caused great harm, and even death, to “little ones.”

We prefer to hear, from **Luke 18.15-17**, “People were bringing infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” With these words Jesus asks us to accept the reign of God among us with the simplicity, innocence and trust of a little child, always ready to believe what parents tell her.

In **Matthew 10.42** Jesus says “whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly, none of these will lose their reward.” In the picture above you can imagine that Jesus would be the first to fetch a glass of water for the homeless young man who may have only the park bench to sleep on. Jesus is looking him gently and kindly full in the face, and that is what those in homelessness appreciate – a real conversation with any one of us who is prepared to listen.

Children are certainly “little ones” in the compassionate eyes of Jesus, but so were the crowds who longed to hear his teaching. So were the sick, and any whose condition prevented them being part of the worshipping community.

As we think about parenting, and the role of parents and the bonds of love which bind us, we think how hard it is to lose a child, or to hear of harm done to a child or to a loved one who is “little” in their capacity to make their own choices for good.

So many of our First Nations people are “little” when they die in custody because they cannot survive being forcibly detained, shut in and alone.

Recently, George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks, African Americans, died at the mercy of adults – police – whose task was to be objective peace-keepers, capable of good judgement and kindness, but who exercised cruelty and heartlessness.

William Callaghan, 14 and autistic, was a “little” one. He wandered away in the bush in freezing conditions overnight. He aroused the desire to help and rescue in a large number of local people who went out to find him. In the man who did find him, he evoked common sense, gentleness, and intelligence in approaching him and carrying him to safety.

The name Ann Marie Smith calls forth our pity and disbelief. She was “little” with the helplessness of a child through her condition of cerebral palsy. She depended on the help of an adult for all her needs, and that adult failed her, neglected her and it would seem, perhaps not alone, defrauded her and robbed her. These are the horrendous details which the police are bringing forth day by day since we learnt of the way she died, unbearable to think of in our own city, and for me, close to where I used to minister. Her parents seem to have put everything in place for her to have a comfortable home, and to be well cared for when they could no longer do that. What a betrayal of trust.

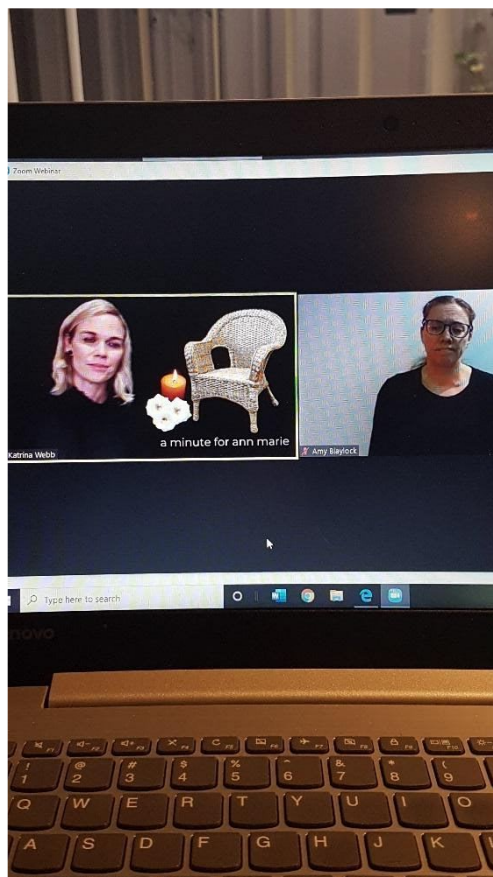
“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them.”

We pray: Lord Jesus Christ, you showed us your tender love, like that of a mother or father, for children and for all the vulnerable. We pray for all who are given the sacred role of parenting: for the young and inexperienced, for the older, wiser and perhaps weary ones – grandparents who must take up the role once more. We thank you for all adults who are parenting children, whether their own or by choice. Guide any who have wrong impulses towards neglect, unkindness, cruelty, lack of love of any kind, whether harsh words, hurtful attitudes, physical contact of any inappropriate nature. We thank you for every gesture of love and care and nurture in following your own outpouring of love, learnt in your own earthly family from a self-giving mother and a faithful father. May homes where there are children be places of love, respect, safety and peace, joy and dignity and mutual caring one for another. We pray in your name, Jesus, our loving saviour, friend and brother. **Amen.**

The Rev’d Dawn Colsey, Chaplain.

On the page below, I have included the photo which I took while watching the ‘webinar,’ an on line seminar called A Minute for Ann Marie. It was organised by a group of women with disabilities – I think it is better to think ‘differently abled’ – to provide an opportunity to remember and grieve for the lovely woman who died from neglect in a way that should never happen among us in our society.

It was led by the Paralympian Katrina Webb, and Auslan interpreted by Amy Blaylock. Lorna Hallahan, an Anglican perhaps known to you, and who works at Flinders University, was also among the speakers.



I took this strange photo while watching A Minute for Ann Marie. It was the chance to pause and give words to the grief which I imagine you shared on learning about her. Unfortunately we are hearing more details from the police investigation each day about the lack of love and care which led to her death. Notice the symbolism of the cane chair, the gold candle and the three white flowers. We pray for justice and forgiveness in Jesus' name. Amen.