

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2023

A couple had two little boys, ages 8 and 10, who were excessively mischievous. The two were always getting into trouble and their parents could be assured that if any mischief occurred in their town their two young sons were in some way involved. The parents were at their wits end as to what to do about their sons' behaviour. The parents had heard that a priest in town had been successful in disciplining children in the past, so they asked the priest to speak with the boys.

The priest agreed, but asked to see them individually. The 8 year old went to meet with him first. The priest sat the boy down and asked him sternly, 'Where is God?' The boy made no response, so the priest repeated the question in an even sterner tone, 'Where is God?' Again the boy made no attempt to answer. So the priest raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face, 'WHERE IS GOD?'

At that the boy bolted from the room and ran directly home, slamming himself in the closet. His older brother followed him into the closet and asked what had happened. The younger brother replied, 'We are in BIG trouble this time. God is missing and they think we did it.'

One question Jesus addresses in today's gospel is "Where is God?" If we were to ask ourselves this question we might answer that God is present in the Eucharist, the Scriptures, the priest, or a beautiful church building. And these would all be true. But today Jesus invites us to look for God in unexpected places, not the wise and intelligent, rather in people that Jesus calls "the little ones",.

So let's think about this. How many lessons have we learned from children, from someone we did not expect it? This prompted me to think about my personal experience of finding God in unexpected places and people. A personal story.

Some years ago when I was a pastor, a wandering homeless man came to the door asking for help. He would come around every few months looking for financial assistance to go to the next town. I invited him in and we sat in the visiting room talking. We chatted for a bit and then he asked me for a glass of water. It was then I realize how hard my heart was. I was giving what was expected but quite grudgingly. His look, words, broken body and spirit from living on the streets pierced my soul and at that moment, I saw Jesus and realized my heart was not that of a cheerful giver. I needed to see Jesus in others, best preached with generous love and actions - and words if needed. I kept the glass I used to give him some water as a reminder of who each person is that I encounter.

So, as you can see, God can be found in many expected places. But His footprints are also elsewhere, waiting to be discovered. Where have you unexpectedly found God?