



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



Homily – Mass with Salesian Sisters
January 31, 2015

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near” (Phil 4:4-5). These words of St. Paul to his beloved Philippians are very appropriate to our celebration this afternoon. The Salesian Sisters are known for your kindness toward all whom you serve, and your motivation, inspiration, and perseverance are to be found in your relationship with the Lord.

Jesus tells his disciples in today’s gospel reading that “unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3). What does he mean by this? We are adults and should act like responsible adults, should we not? Moreover, we sometimes fantasize about the innocence of children. Perhaps this is true of some children at an early age, but, in reality, children are often self-centered. They have to learn – they have to be taught – how to be considerate of others, to learn how to live in right relationships with others.

So what does Jesus mean when he says we must become like children? Perhaps it means that we must become as teachable as children – never thinking we have all the answers, being open to learning new insights about others, about ourselves, about God! We need to become aware and acknowledge our utter dependence on God for everything, to thank him for his many gifts to us, to ask his help in facing difficult situations. We have to learn what it means to be fully dependent on a Parent, God, who can be trusted as no human parent can be trusted. We have to learn how to relate with others in the way that God relates with us – with mercy, compassion, unconditional love. That is a constant theme of Pope Francis, and it is derived from the mission, the ministry, and the example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Speaking to God's people who were living in exile, far from their homeland, people who were disillusioned, dejected, and lost – the prophet Ezekiel described God as a Shepherd who gathers those who have been scattered and alienated in cloudy and dark times -- rescues those who are burdened – brings them home where they belong – nurtures them in green pastures – heals their wounds – gives them rest. The Good Shepherd seeks out the strays and brings them back to the flock, binds up the wounded, heals the sick.

Pope Francis has often described his vision of the Church as a field hospital on a battlefield where the members of the Church tend to people who are wounded, those who are threatened by death. This is the challenge for us – to realize what it means to need a good shepherd, a trusted parent, someone who cares deeply for us in order to become that kind of person for others – especially for the youth and young people whom you serve, my dear Sisters.

You know better than I no doubt how wounded so many young people are – lost along their way, tending to stray from God's ways, feeling unloved with no one to care about them -- pressured by their peers to take risks or to dominate others, to bully and threaten others, to use others for their own pleasure or evil intent.

Young people today – and older people as well – need someone upon whom they can truly rely, someone who will lead them to God, someone who will care about them as the Good Shepherd does for each member of his flock.

May God who has begun a good work in you bring it to completion!
May Our Lady of Guadalupe accompany you and help you share your

maternal affection and love for all of God's people, especially the most vulnerable!