

Lent Devotional March 23, 2026

Scripture

Mark 9:30-41

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

33 Then they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them, and taking it in his arms he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 Whoever is not against us is for us. 41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward."

Devotion

The Rev. Steven Fazenbaker '20

Twentieth century mystic Thomas Merton once wrote in a letter to his friend Fiona Gardner: "The Lord give you every blessing and joy and keep ever fresh and young your 'child's mind,' which is the only one worth having." Indeed, not long after imploring his disciples to welcome the child, Jesus goes on to say that "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15). Could it be that the child Jesus put *among* them could also represent the child that was *within* each of them?

In her book, *The Only Mind Worth Having: Thomas Merton and the Child Mind*, Fiona Gardner states that pre-verbal children lack the capacity to name things, let alone assign value to them. She then suggests that adults can develop their "child's mind" by approaching the world, as children do, with curiosity rather than judgment, and she offers three practices toward this end. The first practice is to reconnect with nature. Gardner writes, "the small child does not discriminate ... through accepting one thing such as a butterfly, and rejecting another thing such as a slug, until they are encouraged to do so." The second practice is reading and writing poetry, paradoxically using as few words as possible to describe the world with as much detail as possible. The third practice is playing, that is, engaging in activities in which being engaged in the activity is its own reward.

During this Lenten season, we are invited to discern that which is acceptable about ourselves, and that which should be rejected. Let us also practice welcoming our child within, then seeing the world through that child's eyes.

Prayer

Creator and creating God, when You decided to become flesh and dwell among us, You came in the form of a child. Help us to recognize the child within each of us, and to remember that child is created in Your image. In the name of the Christ Child, amen.