

Thoughts on the Daily Word:

19th Week of Year. Tuesday 11th August. Readings of Day: Ezekiel 2:8-3:4; Psalm 118; Gospel: Matthew 18:1-5,10,12-14.

In love with history in my teenage years, I explored the Central Library. I remember taking out a big book on the history of childhood. I thought that I could read anything historical. I vividly remember being so horrified after the first few chapters that I closed the book and returned it. It was horrific. I discovered then, and since, that history reveals a different world. A world where childhood did not exist, and children were dispensable. Our famous expression, that we take for granted, 'women and children first', did not exist in any world before the nineteenth century, and then probably only in parts of the West. It made sense, of course, men came first, followed by women, with children a long way behind, even after the animals. Survival in a harsh and dangerous world prioritised male power to fight, hunt and till the land. Patriarchy existed to maintain the survival of the fittest. Few children survived beyond childhood or what we now call the teenage years. People could not afford to invest time or energy in children unless there was wealth and power involved. Until the time before Christ, few believed in life after death. What a different world! It took the prophets, like Ezekiel and ultimately Christ, to prioritise the poor, weak and vulnerable. It took Christians millennia to protect children and free slaves, and we are still struggling. Jesus is proclaiming a revolution when he calls his disciples to be like children. We are back to the 'remnant' spirituality and theology! God teaches his people that only by being the last can we become the first. Fighting to be first is not a good strategy in God's kingdom.