

Dear sisters, when I was young boy, I used to hear a very beautiful song of Barbra Streisand, the famous American singer. It's an old song in the 1960s. The title of this song is *People*. Maybe some you here have also heard this song.

There is a part in the song that stuck in my mind, and until now I still remember that line. It goes: "People, people who need people are the luckiest people in the world." The message of the song is simple. If you want to be happy in life, *first be a person who needs people*.

I remember this song when I reflected on today's Gospel. Jesus says: "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Children. One essential characteristic of *children* is their *being dependent* on others. *To be a child means to depend on others*. Children are people who need people. Children need their parents to survive. They are vulnerable and fragile. That's why they need to be taken care of. This complete dependence on others is the reason why children find it very easy to *trust* people. All they can do is depend on and trust others.

On another occasion, Jesus also tells us that unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. This means that we belong to God's Kingdom when we completely depend on God, in the same way that children depend on and trust their parents.

At some point in life, we ceased to be children. We don't know exactly the point in time when we became adults. But I think we ceased to be children when we learned to assert our independence and autonomy. We became adults the moment we could take care of ourselves. We didn't have to depend on people anymore as much as we did when we were children.

When a person becomes more secure of himself, when he feels secure of wealth, power, or success, he loses his sense of dependence on others. One becomes self-sufficient in such a way that one doesn't need others anymore.

In this way, we unconsciously lost one characteristic of being a child—that is, the sense of dependency on others. And so, we became self-sufficient; we became autonomous.

There is only one person in history who never outgrew his childlikeness and his sense of dependence on the *other*—and that is our Lord Jesus.

Jesus remained *childlike* throughout his life because He never shed off His **dependence** on others.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus as a **person who needs people**. He loves to be with people. He welcomes everyone. He even goes out of his way to be with sinners and outcasts of society. He loves to eat and drink with friends. **He is not self-sufficient**—emotionally and spiritually.

Jesus needs people so much that He oftentimes *invites* Himself to people's house because He does not have a home of his own. "Zacchaeus come down, for I intend to have dinner in your home!" Perhaps Jesus was very hungry that he asked a stranger to prepare dinner for himself.

One time, after a day of teaching and preaching, He went home to Peter's house to rest and have a warm meal. But Peter's mother-in-law was sick. No one prepared dinner. So, what did Jesus do? He healed her. And immediately, Peter's mother-in-law prepared dinner for Jesus.

Since Jesus is a person who needs people, He is the happiest person in the world with many friends like Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

Jesus' sense of dependence on others perfectly corresponds to His virtue of trust. His entire life is a life of trust in the Father. Until the very end, Jesus puts everything in the Father's hands. At Gethsemane, Jesus prays: "Father, if it's your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will must be done."

When I was reading the letters of your dear Foundress Maddalena, two qualities of hers struck me: first, her **dependence** on and **trust** in God; second, her great sense of humor. On the 2nd of February 1817, Mother Maddalena wrote to Sr. Elena Bernardi: "I recommend you to be joyful . . . Just think of eating as much as you can, try to sleep and do not go about worrying As for me, you know well that I think I will laugh even when I am at the point of death. More than anything else you know very well that God sustains us with His mercy. So do not worry about anything."

To the same Sister she wrote the following on the 1st of October, 1818: “My dear daughter, trust in God. Pray to Mary . . .” And at the end of the letter, she gave her a good advice: “Have a good sense of humor, as I too truly recognize my desire to always want to laugh, as a great gift from the Lord.”

In the book *Between Heaven and Mirth*, James Martin writes that a *lighted hearted spirit* is an essential element of a healthy spiritual life and a healthy life in general.

Your dear Mother Foundress did not only have complete trust in God but also that special gift of humor—that lightheartedness bespeaking the depth of her spirituality.

Let me end my sharing with you, by quoting again Mother Maddalena. In this quotation, we sense her sense of humor working in combination with her trust in God.

She wrote this letter four days before Christmas to Sr. Rosa Dabalà on December 21, 1883. At the time, there were many Sisters who were sick. Mother Maddelena wrote the following: “I am sorry to know that some of our country-girls are sick and I am sorry not to be there to make them laugh. On the other hand, I have the chance to laugh even here, since I have five or six Companions sick including the Superior. But I hope it will be nothing both at Bergamo and here, and that we will continue to eat our *polenta*.”

Dear sisters, you are **Women of the Word! Go, love without measure.** As Mother Maddalena once said: “Those who love are never tired, since love knows no burden.” Amen.