

## J. J. !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was  
and Who is to come. ☩ Amen.

And he took them up in his arms,  
laid his hands on them,  
and blessed them.

--Mark 10:16

**A**n alternate First Reading for this Sunday is from the Book of Job, the first and second chapters. This is where Job, not identified as anyone in particular, not even identified as a Hebrew, but simply as a *hassid*, that is, a righteous man, but also a well-to-do man, a man blessed with a wife, with a fruitful marriage, with a large of family of sons and daughters who were on their way to

making their own way in the world, a family that enjoyed life. Job was blessed with every reason to be thankful to God, as he was thankful. The sons and daughters were, in fact, having a party at one of their homes when calamity struck, as the LORD had permitted Satan to tempt Job. The collapse of the house the young people were in killed all of them. Their father grieves, but declares, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gives and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD!" (1:21). The writer adds that, "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong-doing" (1:22). Through illness, which compounds the agony of his grief, through his wife's loss of faith and her blasphemy, and through the well-meaning but inept counsel of his closest friends, Job endures by faith in the ultimate goodness and wisdom of God. At the end of the

story, all that Job has lost is restored to him, including and especially the blessing of seeing his posterity, not the same sons and daughters Job had lost in the tragedy, but new sons and daughters and their children and their children's children, four generations in all (42:7-17).

Of course, such blessings as children cannot be replaced—ever. The children parents brought to Jesus for a blessing were precious to them. Some of them may have been sick, some crippled in body or mind. All of them would have to grow up in a brutal world. All of those children needed a blessing because each one of them was irreplaceable, and that is the way Jesus treated them, that is the way He treats them, welcoming them into His Church through Holy Baptism. That is the way those who live in Christ treat children.

Job welcomed not one but two sets of children into this world and into his life and family. A tragedy with causes too deep and too high for us to comprehend was the occasion for that double love, that loving and hoping again following terrible loss. This past week, we have witness not only such a tragedy, certainly more unspeakable and harder to bear in its own way that that suffered by Job, but we have also witnessed a miracle of love and forgiveness that I hope will mark our lives more than what was done to those ten little girls in Lancaster County. For we have seen the decision of a Christian community of faith *against* accusation and bitterness and *for* forgiveness. We have been permitted to witness a community which has dealt with its loss by reaching out to others, and specifically to a mother and children in their midst who might have wondered whether they should stay,

whether they even *could* stay. In making it clear to the Roberts family that they should stay in Nickel Mines, that their home is among them where it always had been, the Amish community has transferred the love it will no longer be permitted to give to the children it has lost to those children who remain, most especially the Roberts children.

That is how I pray we will deal with the thoughts and feelings we all surely have about this evil which has struck so very close to home, that we may endure this in the One Who suffered all things for us, that we may open our arms to children in Him, as His people.

✠Amen.

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us our sins by His blood, and has made of us a kingdom, priests to His



God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion, with the  
Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

