

How many of you here are the youngest sibling? Great! Looks like there are many of you. You are going to love what I say.

Biblical scholars have discovered in Bible stories a pattern, which they call “the younger child motif.” They found that in stories that have to do with two brothers or two sisters, it is almost invariably the younger one who emerges as the hero, the good guy, the one who laughs last.

Starting from the story of Cain and Abel, through those of Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, David and his brothers, , the prodigal son and his elder brother, to that of Mary and Martha, we find it is usually the younger sibling who ends up more at peace with God and people. It is hard to make sense of this biblical pattern, but a theory put forward by Carl Jung seems to help.

According to Carl Jung, the human personality is driven by two energies, which he calls by the Latin words of *senex*, meaning old man or senior, and *puer eternis*, the eternal boy or child.

CARL JUNG

Human personality is driven by two energies

SENSEX, SENIOR

- More wise, prudent, calculating, always looking before leaping and so ends up not leaping at all
- More preserving and security conscious
- More geared towards competition, power, success
- More responsible

PUER ETERNIS, CHILD

- More venturesome, more prone to making mistakes and takes more chances
- More easy-come-easy-go, more prepared to change and let go
- More attuned to cooperation and celebration
- Light-hearted.

The senior is more wise, prudent and calculating, always looking before leaping and so ends up often not leaping at all. The child energy, on the other hand, is more venturesome, more prone to making mistakes, and takes more chances. The senior is more preserving and security conscious, the child is more like easy-come-easy-go, more prepared to change and to let go. The senior is more geared towards competition, power and success, the child energy is more attuned to cooperation and celebration.

The senior is more responsible while the child is more lighthearted. In large families, it often happens that the parents transfer their senior energies to their first children and the latter children end up conserving more of their child energies. Jung goes on to say that when one of these two energies takes over the personality entirely, the result is personality death. To be fully human, fully alive, these two energies must find a balance, a harmony in the personality.

When we look at the actions of the disciples in today's gospel, we find that they are acting from a senior energy overdrive. First, we find that, for the second time, Jesus tries to tell them in plain language of the suffering, death and resurrection that awaits him in Jerusalem. They do not understand, yet they do not ask. Isn't that typical of senior men? They say one reason why God created Eve was because God was afraid that Adam would always be lost in the garden because men hate to ask for directions. That is the senior energy expressing itself.

Then Jesus asks the disciples what they were arguing about on the way. And Mark says, "The disciples were silent." Isn't that true that we men are ashamed to accept our mistakes or undesirable things we do or talk about.

The disciples were arguing about which one of them was the greatest. This shows that they are relating to one another and working with one another on the basis of competition rather than cooperation.

If this is not enough, the two brothers James and John had their mother make an extraordinary request to Jesus asking that when he enters the kingdom, to seat them on his right and left. Boy! Were the other ten angry about this?

Now you begin to understand where the little child comes in.

"Then Jesus took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me'" (Mark 9:36-37).

The critical importance of this declaration lies in this: that unless we welcome the child, all our efforts to accept the Lord Jesus as our personal Lord and savior may be as unproductive as the efforts of the disciples to follow Jesus.

To accept the child can mean more than one thing, but one thing it must include, according to Jung's analysis, is to accept the child part of our personality.

With this we become less calculating, less concerned about our personal dignity or shame, less afraid of failure and death, and less grabbing for power and success.

When we accept the child part of our personality, we will bring those child-like qualities to the forefront- trust, light-heartedness, willingness to accept our ability to make mistakes and own them up, our willingness to collaborate with others and change and let go. Like children, we

will be celebrating the here and now, the gifts God has bestowed on us now, and not worry about tomorrow.

With more of the child energy, we shall be more disposed to take a leap in the dark, to let go. Then, only, does believing and following Jesus become possible.

Our culture today, even more than the Hebrew culture of the disciples, is heavily biased in favor of the senior energy. I am number 7 of nine children. Biblically, number is a perfect number. I am an imperfect man. My own culture is biased in favor of senior energy. I grew up preserving the senior energy. When I went to the 30 day retreat, I had to painfully confront the child within me, that I needed to trust the child part of my own personality. Yes, Jesus was speaking to me then, as he is speaking to me now. And he is speaking to you.

Like the disciples we are very success oriented, and we measure success in terms of comparing ourselves with others. Jesus challenges us today to make room for the childlike energy of trust, of laughter, of cooperation and celebration with one another.

Whether we are nine years old or ninety-nine, and whether we are the firstborn, the last-born, or the only child of the family, the message of Jesus challenges us all to embrace the child part of our personality.