



# Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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## Let the Little Children Teach Us

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on MARCH 27, 2017

The gospels tell us that Jesus loved children. When people were bringing their children to him to be blessed, his disciples rebuked them. But Jesus scolded the disciples, saying, "Let the children come to me." Then "he embraced the children and blessed them, placing his hands on them" (Mk. 10:13-16).

Another time the apostles asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus called a little child over, placed him in their midst, and said, "Unless you become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:3). And finally, he said, "Whoever receives this child in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me" (Lk. 9:46-47).



(Source: BenSanji)

Unfortunately, children have not always been

## About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame,  
teacher, student, author,  
speaker, listener, friend,  
poet, farm girl.



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respected by adults—even in recent centuries. In the early years of the Industrial Age,



Source: Sobima)

for example, child labor was commonplace. Children worked long hours on the farms, in factories, in mines, and as chimney sweeps. In 1788, two-thirds of the laborers in the water-powered cotton mills in England and Scotland were children! Not until the early 1800's were there campaigns to curb child labor. The first laws

seem primitive by our standards today. The laws stated: 1) Children had to be 9 years old to work in the cotton and wool factories. 2) No one under 18 could work more than 10 hours a day. 3) No one under 25 could work the night shifts.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the attitude toward children reflected greater respect and understanding. One of the most significant changes was the introduction of compulsory education in tax-supported schools in which children learned from trained teachers. The establishment of the parochial school system in the U.S. demonstrates the priority that the Church places on the education of children.

We usually think it is we, the adults, who teach our children. But often, it is the children

who teach us. I'd like to share with you a few wise words that came from "the mouths of babes"—or at least, from the mouth of a child.

\* A mother asked her 5-year-old son what kind of a day he had at school. He said, "Awesome!" She asked him what made it so awesome. He replied, "Because I

## About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality—the everyday kind of spirituality that includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.



Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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wanted it to be.”

\* A 5-year-old girl said, “I like the wind because it makes everything dance.”

\* A 3-year-old boy was making a mess while taking a bath. His mother told him to calm down. With his arms up in the air, he said, “But I MUST have fun!”

\* A 4-year-old girl said, “You might be scared, but sometimes being scared is worth it.”

\* Another 4-year-old girl was talking to her new stuffed dog. “You don’t like potatoes. I don’t like potatoes too.”

\* A 5-year-old brought home his kindergarten worksheet. It said, “If you could teach everyone one thing, what would it be?” He had written this answer: meditation.

\* A 3-year-old girl said, “It’s okay if she isn’t kind to me. I can show her how.”

\* A grandmother was walking on the beach with her small grandson, when he suddenly yelled, “I just love being in this world!”

Today you might want to reflect on these questions:

+What impact have children had on your life?

+ Has any child ever taught you an important lesson?



(Source: Poison\_Ivy)

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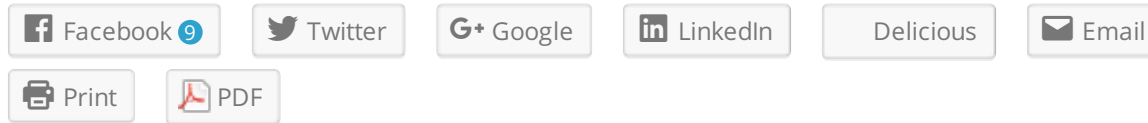
We might also remember in prayer those children all over the world who are living in difficult circumstances—those living with malnutrition, neglect, illness, war, violence, abuse, and those still caught up in terrible child labor conditions.

The video today is based on a book entitled *Children's Letters to God* compiled by Stuart Hample and Eric Marshall. I think children can teach us much about prayer through these simple letters.

*Did anything stand out for you in this reflection or video? We'd love to hear from you below!*

**PS:** A big THANK YOU to all the folks who attended the Saturday morning retreat at St. Cyril Spiritual Center in Danville, PA. I enjoyed meeting you and interacting with you. You inspired me in many ways. Special thanks to Sister Jean for organizing the morning, to Sister Michael Ann for being my “tech person,” to the food service staff for a delicious dinner, and to all the Sisters for their warm hospitality.

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**Kathleen Magiera** March 27, 2017 at 5:20 am



Sr. Melannie,

I am a special education teacher. I have learned so much about acceptance and unconditional love through the years from children with disabilities.

Kathleen

REPLY

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**John Hopkins** March 27, 2017 at 7:22 am



Good Morning Sr. Sister Melannie,

So when my children were still living in the house, I started to record some of the things they said and put them in a notebook entitled – you guessed it – “What They Said.” Here are some samples, this one from my daughter Kate, then 17, now 33: “I had to taste it to be sure it wasn’t poison. I didn’t want God to look bad after grace.” She was explaining why she took some food before grace. Here’s something my nephew said to my wife when he was about five: “I was good today. I hold back my naughties.” And then this one from my son Brian when he was eight: “The shepherds were probably dirty when they saw Jesus.” He was responding to fact that he had to go to church with jeans that had holes in them. He called them “holey” jeans. Finally, this word was neatly printed on my ten year old son’s (Danny’s) spelling folder: “seplling”! Children! God love ’em!

REPLY

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**Susan** March 27, 2017 at 7:42 am



I have 3 lovely grandchildren and what they have taught me is to be more spontaneous and to remember to make things fun. Also, the way they marvel at the smallest things in nature reminds me what a big and beautiful world God has created and given to all of us.

REPLY

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**Jean Canatsey** March 27, 2017 at 9:45 am



I am a cradle Catholic but as a child growing up in a small rural Methodist community, I went to Sunday Mass in a neighboring town with my immediate



family and Vacation Bible School and later to MYF with my Methodist friends. My favorite childhood song-and one that still lingers in my mind- is “Jesus Loves Me”. Thank you, Sr. Melannie, for allowing me to meditate on it for awhile this morning.

REPLY

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**Janet** March 27, 2017 at 10:03 am



Dear Melannie,  
Thank you for bringing me back to the awesomeness of children. Last year I left 10 years of working in a preschool and miss the wonder, simplicity, and joy of children. The greatest lesson they taught me is to live one day at a time. For them the next day is entirely new.

REPLY

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**Marilyn T. Sabatino, S.N.D.** March 27, 2017 at 10:32 am



ah to teach children is a gift...to have them teach us is even a greater gift. A child once told me “when I think of Jesus my heart smiles”. And thus we go one with life.

REPLY

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**Anita COMPAGNONE** March 27, 2017 at 10:39 am



I’m happy to begin my week with Sunflower Seeds Sister. The reflections are thought provoking and stay with me throughout the week! Thanks. Nita

REPLY

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**Stephen Hadwiger** March 27, 2017 at 10:54 am



When my younger son was 5 years old, an older child was hitting him at school. I told him to hit the bully back. My son looked at me with confusion and said, "But I thought we were suppose to forgive our enemies." I learned from him.

REPLY

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**Patty** March 27, 2017 at 1:51 pm



Oh, thank you so very much, Sister. Wise words to reflect upon, not only during this Lenten season, but every day, of every season.

REPLY

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**Kathy** March 27, 2017 at 2:09 pm



Thanks again for your wonderful reflection. This was very appropriate for me today, because it is my oldest daughter's birthday! 32 years ago I became a mom, and really had no idea - she did teach me! And she continues to share her knowledge with me and others - my daughter is a librarian.

REPLY

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**Mary Anne** March 27, 2017 at 2:10 pm



Want to share an experience I had on Sunday two weeks ago. I was sitting



in the fourth pew at church waiting for Mass to begin. A family of seven came in and sat in the first pew. Their children ranged in age of perhaps a 2 1/2 years old to 18-19 year old. While the whole family knelt with their heads bowed down, the little girl decided she was going to explore. She crawled up on the seat, walked behind her whole family, then got down and walked into the aisle. She then proceeded to walk up the steps to the altar and was making a bee line to the back of the altar. By this time her daddy looked up and saw her. He immediately sprinted from the pew to catch up to her. She had no idea he was coming. He got within five feet of her when she immediately turned right and knelt on a kneeler in front of the statue and candle stand of St. Joseph. Beautifully, her father did not grab her and carry her back to the pew. Instead, he knelt on the floor beside her for a few seconds then together they walked back to the pew. That father was a perfect example of St. Joseph and that little girl shows us that we much be child like in our worship. It's amazing what we can learn by watching our precious children.

REPLY

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**DonnaJean Gifford** March 29, 2017 at 12:01 am



S. Melannie, I was a participant in the morning retreat in Danville. Thank you so much for an inspiring morning and “food” for the last three weeks of Lent. Also, thank for your reflection. Children not only teach us, they renew new us. Your Blog has been added to my reading list.

REPLY

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**Mary Fran** April 6, 2017 at 8:18 pm



Melannie,

Great theme to unpack. Love the pictures. Thank you  
Mary Fran

REPLY

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**Marilyn** April 27, 2017 at 2:20 pm



Thank you! These were wonderful. They made me smile and think. What would I say in my letter to God?

REPLY

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