

A LESSON LEARNED

By Anne MacCormack

Summer was coming to a close, and the new school year was rapidly approaching for children. Since summer is my favorite time of the year, and I loved having my kids home to enjoy it together, I was somewhat saddened by these two events. One mother in the neighborhood always hung out the flag on the first day of school as an expression of her joy and freedom, but that was not me—and I'm sure it was not hers either, but she liked to joke about it. However, it was a time for big-time preparation that seemed endless—new shoes, various items of clothing, hair cuts, backpacks, school supplies.

Another thing that made me sad was the fact that my five-year old son, (my baby) was going to kindergarten, and his sister would be attending her last year in elementary school before going to middle school. The big day arrived, and they both were spruced up and ready to go. There is a picture burned into my memory of the two of them walking away from me with my little son holding on to his big sister's hand with a mixture of eagerness and fear on his face. I felt a tear glistening on my cheek and a bittersweet moment...happiness for them for the good experiences they were about to encounter and yet melancholy for myself, as my little man was growing up and not always going to be under my watchful eye.

I could hardly wait for the kindergarten session to be over so that I could hear more about my son's experiences. As I stood on the sidewalk, the school door finally burst open, and out emerged masses of noisy and happy children searching for their mothers. I could hardly contain myself, but I waited patiently until we arrived home so that I could interrogate him in peace and quiet. I sat him down in a big comfortable chair and said, "Now you can tell me all about your day—was it lots of fun, what did you do, do you like your teacher?" I had plenty of questions, but he was quite reserved with his answers—"yes" "no" and "okay," and that he liked the teacher—that was about all I could pull out of him. He made it clear that he sought release from his torture to have lunch, so I had to finally let him go without all the information I was expecting. As he was getting up, he casually added, "Oh!, the teacher said I was the "best dresser." "Really, I replied; and filled with pride, that night I went to work picking out another great outfit, polishing his white buck shoes until they were gleaming, carefully pressing his outfit, and preparing everything needed to again turn

out the “best dresser” by the “best mother” of the kindergarten class. The next two days were like the first— the cross examination began with the same type of questions and always getting nothing much more than “teacher says I am the “best dresser.” And again each night I would work harder to make sure my little five-year-old debonair son kept his title.

The next day, however, when he made his declaration of being the best dresser, I thought I heard a little difference in his speech, and I asked him to repeat the phrase. When he repeated it, he said, “you know, we have to lay down on our mats and rest for a while every day, and I’m the “best rester.” I felt the smugness drain right out of me. The adding, subtracting, and redistribution of a few letters had changed everything; and facing the reality in that second of time forced me to come back down to earth: He was not the best dresser, nor was I the best mother. He was just a cute little boy like the rest of the boys in the class, and I was just like all the other mothers who love and care for their children. .

Luke 22:24-26

²⁴A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

While this story is not exactly an example of what Jesus is trying to convey in the scripture, I believe it illustrates how we can become enamored by our own importance. Jesus tells us that we are to be humble and that we are not to think that we are better or smarter than our brothers and sisters and that our purpose is to serve others regardless of who they are or where they are from.