Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 Jn. 3:2)

It is a very sweet promise. It is also a revelation. If you are not like Him now, chances are you do not see Him clearly, or know Him well. I think of this often when I am encountering other Christians. It is easy to have a facility with doctrine and Christian thought. However, that same facility can be deeply misleading. It is possible to mistake such knowledge for saving knowledge. At the same time, it is not uncommon to disregard such things as kindness, generosity, and gentleness as nothing more than “morality.” The Christian life cannot be divided in such a manner. Saving knowledge is manifest as the character of Christ within us. Without this knowledge (which is synonymous with “character”) everything we take to be “knowledge,” such as doctrine and Scripture, will be woefully misunderstood, even to the point where it is working death within us.

In the Divine Liturgy, we are told, “Let us love one another, so that we may know God.” Such a foundation can fathom mysteries. The Creed is utterly less “theology” than today’s catechumenal converts. The Church words, “I believe” in such a case, mean nothing (or worse).

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Today's Scripture Readings:
Galatians 1:11-19 (Epistle, Sunday After)
But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Matthew 2:13-23 (Gospel, Sunday After)
Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

ARE YOU LIKE HIM?
Years ago when I was in seminary, I served a small mission in Chicago. The priest was something of a mentor for me during that time. There was a young girl in the congregation, between two and three years-old. She was convinced that the priest was Jesus. (Well, he was wearing a white robe and he did have a beard.) One Sunday, during his sermon (delivered from the nave rather than the pulpit), she got loose from her parents and went bounding up the aisle. She stopped in front of him and said, “Jesus!” He stopped his sermon, picked her up, and continued while holding her in his arms. When the sermon was completed he took her back to her parents. After the service, he said to me, “Do you know what happened today?” He explained, “She will grow up and have no memory of me. But she will never forget that one day, Jesus picked her up in his sermon.”
I’ve never forgotten the lesson. In my own years in parishes, I’ve had more than a few children make the same connection. Every time, I remember that day, and I remember that it matters ever so much what I do. If I’m not Him, then, at least, I’d better be like Him.

A young couple was inquiring into the Church. They attended a class on the Church’s moral teaching. Their question startled me, “What concern should the church have with our moral life?” My answer startled them. “It’s quite simple. You’re raising my children.” There is no moral free-ride for adults. Whether you want it or not, children are watching you and making choices and decisions. Stanley Hauerwas, the noted theologian and ethicist, has said that the good news/bad news about children is that, no matter what you do, your children are most likely to turn out to be like you. And, of course, they will be really like you, not as you imagine yourself to be.

Among the more striking verses in Scripture is St. John’s declaration: