

“Children are not disciples therefore they are not Christians.” Discuss.

I disagree with this statement. In many events children show signs of discipleship. However, in many instances they behave the complete opposite as a disciple would. At Baptism children are brought into the family of God immediately identifying them with the church. Therefore in name and the in the presence of God they are Christians. It can be argued though that the baby isn't aware of his baptism and is not capable of understanding the sacrament, making his entry into the Catholic Church null and void.

Children often show examples of discipleship in their playground. When a child helps another child who has fallen down it is very reminiscent of the Good Samaritan. Though it is very possible that another child pushed the child who fell down. Children can often very mean to others, disregarding the others feelings, doing what they want for no logical reason (though some adults behave that way too!). Bullying is most common in children. Infants tease and humiliate others and enjoy seeing the other child being laughed at. Although this is true, a child can often not be blamed for his actions. The child may not be old enough to know better or maybe the child has come from a broken home. Children can be pretty mean to others but it may not be their fault.

When children help raise money for charities like Oxfam and Trócaire they show signs of generosity and charity. Many a time I see children asking me to sponsor them in a fast or sponsored silence. But if you asked a child to sponsor you they would give it grudgingly or they would decline to donate. If a child is asked to raise money, it is sufficient. When a child is asked to raise money with the possibility of winning a prize, the amount increases largely. Children are very often selfish and attached to their possessions, much like the rich man in Mark's gospel. Although, children are too young to be expected to be rational and many adult disciples fail as well. Failure goes along with discipleship, as no one is perfect.

Many children attend church on a Sunday proving that they worship God and want to celebrate him. Children will often reflect on their sins and feel guiltier about them than some adults. Children will often pray for their family and the safety of others. While this is true many children do not pray but sit and daydream. They can be loud and distracting from what the priest is saying. The old Victorian rule of children being seen and not heard should be obeyed in church but rarely is.

While at a young age children do not make a conscious decision to answer God's call; they often will serve as altar boys or girls. Like the apostles they are doing a mission for God. The church values their work and praises them for doing so. It may be true however that children are forced into altar service by parents. While this is not their fault it shows that they do not have a genuine interest in helping the church.

We have seen moments where children have been very Christian and not so Christian. However failure is one of the qualities that make a discipleship. In children the good deeds outweigh the bad ones. Children show very Christian qualities without understanding what is meant to be a Christian.

In conclusion children are definitely disciples. In Mark's gospel Jesus says that anyone who wishes to enter the Kingdom of Heaven must be like a little child. If children are not disciples then no one can enter Heaven. The idea of children not being disciples defeats the idea of discipleship. Children are gifts from God, with the right upbringing they can grow up to be good Christian adults.