

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

June 28, 2026



WELCOME

the humility of Jesus

by Drew Downs

One of the curious phrases Jesus uses in scripture is “little ones.” He says it when referring to children and the poor. Essentially those who have no power and cannot protect themselves. And each time, the phrase is used to name those his disciples are called to emulate or protect. Jesus says we are to be like children and that if someone were to harm any such “little one” then it would be better for them to be thrown into the sea.

For us, this might be another way to access the first/last dynamic. As we aren’t called to be the strongest, we also know that God particularly loves the weakest. In this way, there seems to be a truth for us in knowing the humility of Jesus. And in this sense, to actively cultivate weakness. Not, for example, to make ourselves sick, but to grow our relationships with the “little ones” of our world. That we might love them, or if we are them, that we might be loved.

ORDINARY TIME

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Keeping it Real

There is a word that people have been using in tech news around large language models (LLM) like Claude and ChatGPT. It is a word to describe these supposedly AI systems when they make up an answer. They call it "hallucinating." I'm never going to use that word.

Here is the thing about all of the AI hype and what the Pope has rightly argued in his encyclical on the subject: these are artificial creations that don't think or have consciousness. In that way, they aren't *real*.

I grew up watching Data on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. I am the perfect target for sympathy and a nerd for philosophy. So I love asking questions about human consciousness and what it would take for artificial intelligence to be considered real intelligence. Like another sci-fi icon: I want to believe.

This isn't that, however. Because these are systems, not consciousness. They aren't human. Which means they aren't doing human things, like hallucinating. They are, on the other hand, built to produce inaccuracies in the data as if it were a mistake or an expression of creativity.

There is a desire to humanize these machine systems, but it isn't fair to the LLMs or to humans. And this is where so much of the confusion lies: that it isn't only about the cheating in school or the ecological impact or the ease of use or the systems that get streamlined. It is the desire to pretend this stuff is what it means to be human, and as a result, degrade what it means to be human. That's why terms like "hallucinate" or "think" aren't innocent. They are setting humans up to fail at being human against the greater computational power of LLMs.

With love,
Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 8A

June 28, 2026

Collect

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 10:40-42

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

This passage is the end of a great sending of the disciples: when Jesus calls the twelve and says to them that they will go out into the world to do the Jesus work with people: the work of healing the sick, exorcizing demons, and proclaiming the good news. And he says that they should anticipate being welcomed. Remember that. Welcome and be welcomed.

Then he talked about how hard it is, that they are to labor in the fields. That some will want to keep them from laboring. And that some of the people doing that may be members of their own family! But that is the price of the work, of trying to seek reconciliation in the world: not everyone wants that.

This is what leads to the talk this week of reward, which is more like reciprocity and reconciliation. It is what comes of the work, which is to say that it isn't *why* we're called to do the work, but it is outgrowth of doing things. Of welcoming and being welcomed. Of loving and sharing and trusting in God.

We must be careful not to therefore emphasize the reward, for we often take it for the primary motivation. But its more like the byproduct. Like when we say "good things come to those who wait." We aren't saying that there are people who walk around giving people rewards in hospital waiting rooms, "Good job!" We are trying to make virtue out of sacrifice. Whereas Jesus, on the other hand, is saying that welcoming strangers is the point. Because giving water to the one weakened by thirst is itself good. Loving people who need love is good. Being good is good!

Too much Christian witness has valorized struggle, reward, and certainty: of winning people for Jesus or even doing good things for selfish reasons when the gospel keeps speaking to doing good things for the sake of those good things and saying *yeah, that's still the point, actually. To love people.*

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