



June 21, 2020

Dear friends of God,

Happy Father's Day!

This weekend we honor our fathers and father figures. We will bless our fathers this weekend at Mass. Jesus knew God as Father. The Aramaic word that he used was *Abba*. That intimate term can be best defined as "daddy." It describes an intimate and loving relationship. We need to be careful with thinking of God in literal terms such as Father. God is beyond our understanding. Our God is Father, Mother, I Am, Love, Holy, Lord, Comforter, Compassionate, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, All in All, Merciful, Vine, Divine Physician, Being Itself, Redeemer, and the Shepherd looking for lost sheep, the woman searching for the lost coin and the Prodigal Father, found in Luke 15. I would encourage all of us to take some time to read Luke 15. It provides a fuller sense of whom Jesus experienced the Father to be: the One who always searches for us, willing to run after us and even get on His hands and knees to look for us in the dust bunnies of our lives. No image of God shows us the fullness of God, of course, and we have to be careful not to create idols of God. Even though we will only see God face to face in the next life, in this life, God cares for us intimately and always desires to draw us closer to him and to each other.

We have completed our 50 - day Easter season and the last two weekends of important feast days: Holy Trinity and the Body and Blood of Christ. Now we are fully into "Ordinary Time." It is called *ordinary* because the weeks are counted. For instance, we are celebrating the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time this weekend. We will continue to be in Ordinary Time until we begin Advent in November. The Gospel that we will be walking through is the Gospel of Matthew. I have been encouraging us to take more time to read the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels. This might be a good time to read, or re-read, the Gospel of Matthew as we listen to it at the weekend's Masses and see how God might be speaking to each of us. When the Scriptures are proclaimed for us at Liturgy God is not giving us a dead letter, but speaking a living word to us. There is a Real Presence in the Word of God. Let us take some time to be bathed in His Word as we make this Ordinary Time extraordinary.

This weekend we will have Matthew 10:26-33 proclaimed for us. Jesus' first words to the 12 Apostles are always important, but they are especially essential now: "Fear no one." There are

so many that preach fear in our world. It is a pandemic along with Covid-19. I intend to preach on that this weekend, or at least I think that I am. I am writing this column first. Sometimes as I write a homily, I have one idea as I begin, but then I am led in another direction in prayer. I have referred to fear as being a pandemic. I have said this intentionally since a pandemic is defined as a disease that is prevalent over a whole nation or the world. That is certainly true of fear. There are many on both sides of the ideological spectrum that incite fear. They do this not for the good of our nation or our world, but for their own benefit. Fear sells; fear gives others power. May God give us the courage to respond to the prophets of fear with faith in Jesus Christ who says be not afraid.

When we prepare for Mass, we use a source for parts of the Mass such as the petitions. They often offer questions for reflection. I found the questions of the week to be quite helpful yet challenging:

When am I unwilling to stand up for what I believe? What fears prevent me from bringing my faith into the light?

There is much that is troubling in our world as a person of faith. We need to take the time to know how our faith relates to the struggles of the world, pray about the issues that surround us and act on them with love and compassion. In other words, we need to see what is going on, learn what our faith teaches about the situation and then respond with compassion. Our prayer and growing in our understanding of our faith leads us to act as Jesus would, but that can be challenging and trigger much fear within us. Yet, we are called by Jesus to fear no one.

May God bless you with extraordinary peace in this 12th week of Ordinary Time.

Much love,

F. Ken