

Homily: 11th Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: Ex 19: 2-6; Ps. 100; Rom 5: 6-11; Mt 9: 36 – 10. 8

“The Gift of both Spiritual and Human Fatherhood rooted in union with God”

Before we talk about the meaning of Fatherhood on this Father’s Day week-end, we need to thank God for the gift of **divine election** that we have all received through Christ. This process began in the Old Testament as we hear today in the first reading from the Prophet Ezekiel. All of us have been called to God’s tender love. **By embracing the Catholic faith wholeheartedly, we set out on the path to true liberation, to be free to embrace what is really loving, good and true in all areas of life as God is the source of all those gifts.** The truth of God revealed in Jesus is what sets us free as human beings (see John chapter 8); never forget that!

1. **Once we recognize our divine election, then and only then, can we discover the specific call God gives to us, to serve Him and our fellow human beings, in the Church and in the world.** One of the most beautiful of divine callings is to be called to the **ordained priesthood** of Jesus Christ. We hear in the Gospel today that Jesus’s heart was moved with pity for the crowd, “*for they were like sheep without a shepherd.*” And He said to his disciples, “*The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so, ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest.*” Are we praying daily (at least one Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, for this intention) as individuals, and as a parish community, that God blesses our Parish, our Diocese, and the world-wide Church with more priestly vocations? Please include this in your intentions at Mass, when you pray the Rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet, and when you come before the Lord in Eucharistic adoration. Also, when you offer up your daily duties and sufferings, please make one of your intentions: an increase in priestly vocations. **It is so important, for without the ordained priesthood, we are not able to receive the other Sacraments of the Church, which are the primary ways God forms us in holiness through His sanctifying grace.** To serve the Lord full time as a priest, to make of your life a total self-gift in the service of the salvation of others is a gift beyond compare. How exciting it is! **To be a Spiritual Father to a multitude of souls is a humbling and awesome task. There is no greater or**

nobler work in the world! Please pray for those of us who are already priests, by God's election, that we daily grow in holiness, to do this divine work well!

2. **Another noble calling is to be a Father on the natural level through the Sacrament of Marriage.** This is what we are celebrating this Sunday. To be a good father means to be the servant leader of one's household, to be tender yet firm, when necessary, in forming one's children and supporting one's wife. We need to pray that God gives all fathers a healthy sense of **masculinity**. It is tragic that far too often in our current culture, young men are not taught what it means to be a man and what it means to be a father in God. To be a real man does not mean being a selfish and pleasure seeking "playboy" who treats women as playthings for his selfish enjoyment. Instead, a real godly man is one who shows spiritual and physical self-control and purity in his life and who treats all women, esp. his wife, as beautiful persons created in God's image and equal in dignity to men, and who respects the fact that it is through the tabernacle of the woman that God brings new unique human beings into the world. And he sees the noble responsibility of being open to all the children God's wants to bless his family with, and caring for those children and forming them in goodness as a task given by God Himself as a sacred trust, of which he and his wife will give an account.
3. **The only way a man, be it a spiritual Father like myself, or a natural Father like a husband, can live up to this noble calling is if his life is rooted in the self-giving, tender, just, loving Fatherhood of God.** There is no other way! And the way we learn to do this is by rooting our lives as fathers fully in the Catholic Faith. It must be the greatest treasure of our life! If that is the case, this gift of faith and fatherhood will rub off on those around us esp. younger men who desperately need that holy fatherly example. We need to pray for our fathers that God will bless them in this noble task, and if they have fallen away in some ways from their sacred responsibilities, esp. if they are not going to Mass/Confession regularly, that we will call them back, in love, to their sacred duties in God, through our prayer, sacrifice and witness. St. Joseph please pray for all fathers, and may God draw us fathers daily more into His self-giving love. God bless you.