

Homily: 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Cycle B: 2024: Ez 17: 22-24; Ps. 92: 2 Corth 5: 6-10; Mk 4: 26-34

***“True Catholic Fatherhood / Godly Manhood”***

As we celebrate Father’s Day this Sunday, we ask God’s blessings on all fathers, grandfathers and godfathers. We pray esp., for those fathers who have died: may the Lord will have mercy on their souls - if they are in **Purgatory** being purified of their earthly sins. To be a real Father means to be a man of God who sets an example of holy Fatherhood for the people around him: by living a manly life of piety rooted in prayer with his wife, and teaching his children by praying with them, daily spiritual reading, and showing them how to apply the Catholic faith to daily life; through acts of charity, participating in Mass at minimum every Sunday and Holy Day of obligation, and by frequently receiving the Sacrament of Confession since a godly father can attest to both his strengths and his weaknesses and of real need for God’s forgiveness and mercy.

1. The Lord Jesus reminds us today in the Gospel that *“the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants.”* So must our faith grow daily with the help of God’s grace. Embracing the Catholic faith in its fullness is a call to die to self, like the seed put in the ground: it must die to grow and bear fruit. But our faith, once it grows, brings us true life: ultimate meaning, an inner peace and purpose, and in the end eternal life with God. In our day to be a true Catholic father is a call to be counter-cultural because the world we live in today so often preaches: *gratification rather than purification; treating others, especially women, as sexual objects instead of with respect and purity; living for our own (selfish) happiness instead of laying down our life for God and others; and finally living in the fleeting moment rather than viewing things in light of eternity.* It’s quite a challenge! **Dare to be different!** Remember Christ is always here to help us be godly men! **Never forget that!**
2. **Do we realize, esp. us men, that without living our Catholic faith in Christ well, our life has no ultimate meaning?!** This is of course contrary to what our proud world encourages us to do as men: *which is to become a “self-made man”*

*and that we don't need faith and piety as that is for wimpy guys and women and girls - which is why some men aren't here. **That is such a lie of the world, the flesh and the devil.** The counter to this lie is the witness of Jesus especially, but also of St. Joseph and St. Paul and all the male saints down the ages who show us that: **to be a real man** means to lay down our life in obedience to God in the vocation He calls us to: *as a spiritual father as a priest, or as a natural father as a married man, or in the consecrated single life*, and doing all for the service of God and our fellow human beings. There is nothing better or nobler than that! Much more so than being a “self-made” man who steps on others to get ahead, focused on career and money, and selfish pleasure and power, for in the end that will amount to nothing in light of God and eternity! For as Jesus says, “*What does it benefit a person to gain the whole world and lose his soul in the process?*”*

3. Finally, to do all this, to be a godly father who lays down one's life for others by embracing the unique Cross the Lord gives us, means to **be a man of faith and forgiveness**. It is **so easy**, especially when we are **young** to think we can live our life on our own resources without the Divine gift of Faith or without embracing the mystery of the Cross in our lives. It is **so easy** also not to forgive, to hold a grudge against others - esp. when they have hurt us deeply (real or imagined) - but **to forgive is truly divine**. We also need to always remember that according to the Sacred Scriptures (*see the Letter to the Hebrews especially*) **we cannot please God without Faith!** And how can we not forgive others when God has forgiven us so much? This especially applies in **families: husbands in relation to their wives and children - since hurt inevitably develops in relationships over time because of human weakness**. The choice to forgive is **the key** not only to successful marriages, but also good bonds between parents and children. That is also why I mention often in my homilies that the frequent reception of **the Sacrament of Confession** is so important: *because it sensitizes us to this dynamic of faith and forgiveness*. **Remember being a real father means being rooted in God, and what a holy and noble thing that is, for himself and the people around him!** St. Joseph, patron saint of all fathers, pray for us. God bless you. †