

12th Sunday per Annum - C
Zechariah 12:10-11, 13:1;
Galatians 3:26-29;
Luke 9:18-24
Little Flower - 6/19/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all fathers a very happy and blessed Fathers' Day.

Today we celebrate the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Today I would like to focus on just two themes from today's readings.

The first is Peter's profession of faith in today's Gospel. Jesus asked his disciples who other people were saying he was. Their answer was easy: "*John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'*" Then he asked them the more personal question: "*But who do you say that I am?*" Peter responded, "*The Christ of God.*"

One model suggests that there are four stages in the development of faith. The faith of young children is familial faith, the faith of their parents and family. The second stage is affiliative faith, the faith of the community. The third stage is searching or questioning faith. The fourth and final stage is personal faith. During the first three stages, our faith is based on what others are telling us. In the final stage, however, our faith becomes our own. We answer Jesus' question "*But who do you say that I am?*" As William Barclay wrote, "Christianity does not mean reciting a creed; it means knowing a person." Certainly both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis have stressed the same. Faith is, first of all, faith in a person, the person of Jesus Christ.

Today's Gospel is particularly appropriate on Fathers' Day. In the blessing of fathers after the baptism of infants, we pray:

May he bless the father of this child. He and his wife will be the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith. May they be also the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Parents—fathers and mothers—have a tremendous impact on the faith of their children not only during the familial stage of faith but also during the successive stages of their faith journey. Also, choices parents make for the formal religious education of their children will have great impact on them during the affiliative and searching stages of faith.

In today's second reading, St. Paul wrote, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" Today this does not seem radical. However, for the people of Paul's time, it was very radical. Jews considered themselves saved; non-Jews or Gentiles were not saved. Free persons were persons; slaves were non-persons. Men considered themselves and were considered superior to women.

The truth of the matter is that although we are part of a redeemed creation, the victory over sin is not complete and will not be complete until Christ returns. In many parts of the world, Jewish people are still the object of hatred. Slavery still exists in parts of the world, including sex trafficking in the United States. In many societies and to some extent in our own, there is still inequality between men and women. These divisions are evidence of the continuing effects of original sin, societal sin, and personal sin.

My brothers and sisters, last weekend's tragedy in Orlando reminds us how far we have yet to go. It seems to have been both an act of terrorism and a hate crime. As an act of terrorism, it stemmed from a distorted religious ideology. As a hate crime, it stemmed from hatred toward the LGBT community. As a Church and as individual Christians, we are called to respect and love all people. We are called to tear down walls and build bridges. We are called in word and action to advance the kingdom of Christ already present within and among us.