

12th Sunday per Annum - A
Jeremias 20:10-13;
Romans 5:12-15;
Matthew 10:26-33
Little Flower - 6/21/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all fathers a very Happy Father's Day!

Today's Gospel is part of Jesus' Apostolic Discourse, i.e., his discourse to his apostles, those whom he had called to follow him. Usually when we talk about vocations in church, we talk about vocations to the priesthood and religious life. However, marriage and parenting are also vocations from God.

We should never forget that God calls parents to play a special role in his plan of creation and salvation. In the conception of a child, parents partner with God to create the new child. At the same time, parents are also "the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith." Although none of our readings today are about parenting specifically, each offers an insight into what it means to be a parent.

In today's second reading, Paul makes the point that God's gift of Jesus was totally disproportionate to Adam and Eve's sin. Healthy relationships tend to be very balanced. In good marriages, for example, husbands and wives give and receive more or less equally. Good parents, however, give far more to their children than they receive from them. Like God, good parents are primarily givers to their children.

For the prophet Jeremiah, answering God's call meant persecution. Not only are parents primarily givers to their children; most parents are willing to make great sacrifices for their children. For example, you know far better than I how expensive it is to raise and educate children from infancy to adulthood. When I think about my parents, I always think about and appreciate their willingness to sacrifice for my brother and me.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says,

Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

This passage is often used to demonstrate God's providential love for us. However, I think it also captures the meaning of parental love. Like God, good parents watch over their children with love. They do their best to protect their children from harm. They do their best to provide their children with opportunities to live full human and Christian lives.

Although this is a good thing, today parents risk doing too much for their children. Several years ago, a psychologist wrote that today many parents are more concerned with making their children happy than teaching them how to cope. Therefore, they fail to prepare them to live as responsible adults.

My brothers and sisters, the truth, of course, is that there are no perfect parents or perfect children. In fact, some parents and some children have not even been very good. During 45 years as a priest, I have seen so much hurt and anger among both parents and children. Much of this is not easily forgiven or forgotten. I would hope that today, Father's Day, all of us would remember and be grateful for the good things our parents and children have given us. I would hope that today all of us would remember and be sorry for the bad things we have done to our parents and our children. If our parents and our children are alive, I would hope that today we would thank them for all the good things they have done for us. If our parents or our children are deceased, I would hope that we would remember them and pray for them today, Father's Day.