

Homily: 12th Sunday: Cycle B: 2015: Jb 38: 1, 8-11; Ps 107; 2 Cor 5: 14-17; Mk 4: 35-41
“Being a Man of God”

This week-end as a nation we celebrate Father’s day, and so as a parish family we want to wish all fathers, grandfathers, and godfathers a most blessed day and the assurance of our gratitude and most of all our prayers; also remember to pray for all the priests of the Church: our spiritual fathers. We pray especially for those fathers who have died that the Lord will have mercy on their souls, especially 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, acts of charity, coming to Mass at least every week and on the Holy Days, and who frequently receives the Sacrament of Confession - since a real man can admit his weakness and his need for God’s forgiveness and mercy and can give it to others as well.

1. **The Lord Jesus reminds us today in the Gospel that faith in God is the key to everything**, when he asks the apostles, “*Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?*” Yes, our faith must grow on a daily basis with the help of God’s grace, for we are weak in our humanity. Embracing the Catholic faith in its fullness is a call to die to self, like the seed put in the ground: it must die in order to grow and bear fruit. Our faith, if it grows, brings us true life: ultimate meaning and inner peace and purpose, gets us through the storms of life, and in the end eternal life with God. In our day, to be a father, on the natural or the spiritual level as in my case as a priest, it is a call to be counter-cultural since the world we live in today preaches: *gratification rather than purification; treating others, especially women, as sexual objects instead of with respect and purity; to live for our own (selfish) happiness instead of laying down our life for God and others; and finally to live in the fleeting moment rather than viewing things in light of eternity and God’s Heavenly Kingdom.* It’s quite a challenge! **Dare to be different!** Remember Christ is here to help us be godly men! **Never forget that!**
2. **Do we realize, all of us here, but especially 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.☺ **That is such a lie** and the witness of Jesus especially, but also of St. Paul and the other male saints shows us that: **to be a real man** means to lay down our life in obedience to God, in whatever vocation **He has called us to, being firmly rooted in the gift of our Catholic faith, 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, in money and selfish pleasure and power, for that in the end will amount to nothing in light of God and eternity! For as Jesus says, “*What does it benefit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul in the process?*”

3. **Finally to do this, to be a godly person who lays down our life for others by embracing the Cross the Lord gives each of us in our vocation, means to be a person 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, especially when they have hurt us deeply, but **to forgive is truly divine**. **We 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 spiritually important because it sensitizes us to this dynamic of faith and forgiveness; *it is truly the fountain of God’s mercy to purify from sin and spiritual wounds of various sorts.* **After all, sin does blind us to the Truth of God and others and causes us to live in a world of deception - thinking we don’t always need God.** To quote the Catechism: *By sincerely and honestly receiving Confession on a regular basis our conscience, or inner sense of good and evil, is*

*formed and developed in accord with God's truth instead of from our own selfish desires; and so if we are set free from sin which is the source of evil in our lives by God, then we are inspired in love to do the same in relation to others. **All of this pre-supposes a regular life of prayer and ongoing study our Catholic faith; so that our consciences are well formed and acutely aware when do actually sin.** Confession doesn't do a great deal for us on an existential (or real human) level if we are not actively growing in our Faith by prayer and study; after all, grace does build on nature. **A great sign that we are growing in holiness is that when we deliberately sin, be it mortal or even venial, we immediately seek out God's forgiveness,** as my late father powerfully showed me, when I was growing up, by his practice going to Confession frequently, especially after disagreements with my mom or other family members. What a gift and a sign that we are growing in our love for God, who is all holy and good and who we must imitate if we wish to live in His presence forever! As St. Paul reminds us today, "He (Jesus) indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised." **Fathers of the parish I challenge you:** *to pray with your spouse and children on a daily basis (especially the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet), to come to Mass as a family as much as possible, to strive for purity in mind and body, and to make Confession a regular part of your life, every month or two, or more if necessary, and to bring your entire family to the Sacrament regularly (which is sadly a rare occurrence in our time) – but if you start doing it, what a witness to your children and the world that God must be first in our lives, by seeking out his forgiveness in healing in that awesome sacrament.* **Being a real man means being rooted in God, and what an awesome thing that is!** God bless you.*

Recommended reading:

1. *On Penance and Reconciliation: in the Mission of the Church Today: Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* by Pope John Paul II.
2. *Pardon and Peace: A Sinner's Guide to Confession* by Fr. Francis Randolph (Ignatius Press).
3. *Lord Have Mercy: the Healing Power of Confession* by Scott Hahn (Doubleday Press).
4. *Frequent Confession: It's Place in the Spiritual Life* by Benedict Baur (Scepter Press).
5. *The Church Impotent: the Feminization of Christianity* by Leon J. Podles (Spence Publishing).