

June 18, 2023
Cycle A – 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 19:2-6

Psalm: 100:1-2,3,5,

Romans 5:6-11

Matthew: 9:36-10:8

Notes from Bishop Peter

Theme: Saint Joseph as an example for fathers.

“I try to please God,” says Saint Paul
Just the desire to please God does, in fact, please God.

1. Joseph is the primary male image for Jesus. It is through his interaction with Joseph that the infant and boy Jesus develops an idea of God as his Father.
 - a. This is normal for a child and especially for a boy.
 - b. Abba – Jesus later addresses his Father as Abba – unique in the Bible at that time. Now, Jewish children in Israel and elsewhere refer to their fathers as Abba.
 - c. Joseph keeps God at the center of his life.
 - d. He prays the Shema – the prayer from Deuteronomy 6 prayed by observant Jews several times a day: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is God, our only God. Therefore you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind and all your strength...”
 - e. Joseph gives Jesus manly example of one who prays according to Jewish tradition.
 - f. Leads his wife and son to the synagogue each Sabbath.
 - g. The father of former baseball catcher Mike Piazza told Tommy Lasorda, manager of the Dodgers, to make sure Mike attended Mass every weekend. Lasorda was Mike’s godfather.
 - h. How important it is for fathers to keep in mind that their interaction with their wives and children has an impact on them as they develop a relationship with God.

2. Joseph loves his wife, Mary and shows deep respect for her and for his female relatives and neighbors.
 - a. This makes an impression on Jesus as we see in his interaction with women in the New Testament. He always treats them with respect.
 - b. Thus, a father through his love and respect for his wife and for women in the family and neighborhood communicates to his sons that they too should respect women – never belittling them or causing them any harm. Men should esteem women as equals in dignity in all aspects of life.
3. Joseph as patient teacher – carpenter – how to use a plane, how to use hammer and nails and a saw – Jesus makes mistakes and Joseph patiently corrects him so that he might do better.
 - a. They walk together to Sepphoris to work as carpenters and furniture makers.
 - b. The need for fathers to be patient with their children, spend time with them, teach them various skills that will serve them well when they leave home to found their own homes and start their families –
 - c. Just as Joseph must have been strict with Jesus, so fathers with their children. Set guidelines. Insist they do chores to contribute to the good of the family. “We are all in this together.” Moreover, this gives them a sense of the common good as members of a family and of a society.
4. Respect for foreigners – for people who are different. In the Galilee there were many people from other lands living side by side.
 - a. Jesus also treats foreigners with respect – for example, the centurion who asks for a cure for his servant. The soldier says to Jesus, “Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof...” Those words of a foreigner are now part of the Mass.
 - b. Thus the need for fathers to do the same – to show by example that all people should be respected, no matter what their origins. Thus later Jesus could teach that assisting foreigners is equivalent to helping him. “I was a stranger (foreigner) and you welcome me. Whatsoever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to me.”

5. All your efforts at being good fathers create conditions so that the Kingdom of God can break into our world with greater force. The Kingdom of God is a power for good – that touches peoples' hearts and opens them to respect the presence of God in their lives.
6. Through our Eucharist may the Lord Jesus bless the fathers in your parish community and work through them so that they might continue to be positive role models of fatherhood to their children and grandchildren.

Amen.