

HOMILY 12th SUNDAY Ordinary Time

June 21, 2020

A first grade faith formation class was asked to draw a picture of God. One child depicted God as a bright multicolored rainbow. Another presented God as an old man with a long beard coming out of the clouds. A third young boy drew God with a remarkable resemblance to Superman. And one little girl said: "I didn't know what God looked like, so I just drew a picture of my Daddy. I wonder how many of us have our own father as our first image of God. We talk about God the Father, so there would be a natural association with our fathers. Today being Father's Day, I am guessing that many of us are thinking about our fathers. I wonder how much our relationship with our father effect our relationship with God.

As young children we see our fathers, as knowing everything about us, being able to control everything in our world, and always able to keep us safe regardless of what happens. We sometimes think of God this way. Now if we did not have a really good relationship with our father, if we could not trust that our father would always be there for us and always take care of us, we may have a hard time trusting God as well. And when we get a little older, we realize our father does not know everything about us, that sometimes we can get away with things without our father finding out. We realize that our fathers cannot control our world. That some things happen that our fathers cannot control. We also realize that our fathers cannot always keep us safe. It is usually about this time, in adolescence, that our all knowing father suddenly does not know much at all. And not only is our father unable to control our world, we do not want him to. We want to make our own decisions. I wonder if we have that image of God about the same time. God is not taking care of everything the way I would like, so I have

to take control myself. And as we get older, our fathers get really smart again. While we do not want our fathers to control our lives, we want the father that loves us to give us advice.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus talks about his Father. He tells us that God the Father knows everything about us, that he even knows the number of hairs we have on our head. That not a single sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge, and we are worth way more than the sparrow to God the Father, so we should never be afraid. God the Father who loves us gives us great advice through Sacred Scripture, the teachings of the church and through prayer. God the Father does not control our lives, he allows us to exercise our own free will. God the Father who loves us will guide us.

I do not have any children of my own, but thousands of people call me father. And I have felt a lot like a father over the last several months. A number of fathers have told me that they see their primary role in the family to keep their family safe. I have had a lot of sleepless nights trying to figure out the best way to keep everyone in our Parish Family safe. And in this time of pandemic, there are no clear right answers. We are all trying to figure it out as we go along. But I am not afraid. I know that God the Father is with me. God the Father who loves me will give me good advice and guide me. That is what those hours of personal prayer are all about right now. I can always find peace in prayer. I am your spiritual father. I love you and will give you advice. It is up to all of you to decide if you are going to follow that advice or not. And you have to let me know if you think I am getting off track.

I think all men should follow the lead of God the Father, especially as we get into the second half of life. Men tend to be competitive and we sometimes see the younger generation as a threat, especially if we are kind of losing our edge. If we cannot quite do what we could do

when we were younger. We may be threatened by the younger generation taking over, and yes they will. That is what is supposed to happen. We need to bless and encourage our young men, not just our own sons but all the younger men that we work with and interact with.

So, listen to your spiritual father. Wear your mask when you go out in public and socially distance. Wash your hands. If you are part of the vulnerable population, be very careful and try and stay home. The pandemic is not over, but we will get through it together. It is all going to be ok. I want you to all be with us and healthy when that happens.