**Fr. Georg’s Fathers Day Homily (June 21,2020)**

In Ernest Hemingway’s short story “Capital of the World,” a Spanish newspaper, El Liberal, carried a poignant story about a father and his son. It went like this. A teen-aged boy, Paco, and his very wealthy father had a falling out, and the young man ran away from home. The father was crushed. After a few days, he realized that the boy was serious, so the father set out to find him. He searched high and low for five months to no avail. Finally, in a last, desperate attempt to find his son, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read, “Dear Paco, Meet me at the Hotel Montana noon Tuesday. All is forgiven. I love you. Signed, Your Father. On Tuesday, in the office of Hotel Montana, over 800 Pacos showed up, looking for love and forgiveness from their fathers. What a magnet that ad was! Over 800 Pacos!! We all hunger for pardon. We are all “Pacos” yearning to run and find a father who will declare, “All is forgiven.” Today we celebrate Fathers Day. Father’s Day reminds us that we need more loving, forgiving fathers. Happy Father’s Day to fathers, grandfathers, and stepfathers.

Fathers day or Mothers day are not exactly high holy days of the Church, but they do give us reason to pause, to pray for, and to reflect on our fathers and mothers whom we honor. Today, on this Father’s Day, we are offering our dads, living or dead, on the altar of God during this Holy Mass and invoking our Heavenly Father’s blessings on them. Today we celebrate, congratulate, and pray for the men who continue to reflect the Divine qualities of fatherhood as they lovingly establish, nourish, and maintain their families. Fathers are a blessing, and we thank them for blessing us with lives of dedication, endurance, and love.

Let us pray the Our Father during this Holy Mass realizing the meaning of each clause and experiencing the love of our Heavenly Father for us. He is our spiritual Daddy or abba, actively involved in all areas of our lives. It is He on Whom we lean in times of pain and hurt; it is He on Whom we call in times of need; it is He Who provides for us in all ways — practical, emotional, and spiritual. He wants us to think of Him as “Dad.” May all earthly fathers draw strength from their Heavenly Father! On this Father’s Day, please don’t forget to pray for us your spiritual Fathers – men who are called to be Fathers of an immensely large parish family through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Our Scripture readings for this Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time call us to live without fear. The emerging situation with the COVID-19 or coronavirus and the many news reports around us are creating fear, anxiety and worry for our well-being. Fears about this virus are not unwarranted nor to be taken lightly. Lives are at stake. It’s wise to protect ourselves against this outbreak. At the same time, don’t let fear and anxiety consume our life. Jesus asks us in the Gospel of Mathew, “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” (Matthew 6:27). In times like these, it is especially important to remember God’s promise to be with us. But we forget one thing: whatever trouble or crisis affects us; we know that God understands it better than we ourselves do.  Our Heavenly Father knows exactly what is happening. What a release from fear it is to know that God is on our side; that our life is in the hands of a loving God! When fear grips our life we need to remember that being faithful to God wherever we meet him in this life is much more important than our fear or anxiety.

We need not be afraid because our life is in the hands of a loving God. The reason we should not be afraid is God’s compassionate love. We are more important to God than sparrows. The gospel today speaks of two sparrows sold for one penny. The God who cares for a trivial bird like the sparrow also cares about our smallest problems – even the hairs on our heads are counted. While this is an encouraging assurance, it may be difficult to believe in the midst of pandemics like Covid 19. But God knows everything that we go through – nothing that happens to us escapes Him. When we feel lonely and abandoned, when it seems that our prayers are unanswered, God knows and cares. Jesus concludes by saying, “*So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows.”*  In other words, the perfect antidote for fear is trust in God. God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So, we need not be afraid… The last verse of Psalm 27 sums it up nicely*: “Trust in the Lord. Have Faith; do not despair. Trust in the Lord.”*

United with our Holy Father Pope Francis, let us pray in solidarity for our brothers and sisters here and around the world who are sick. Let us pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus. May God console them and grant them peace. We pray also for doctors, nurses, and caregivers, for public health officials and all civic leaders. May God grant them courage and prudence as they seek to respond to this emergency with compassion and in service to the common good. Amen