**11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B**

**June 16/18, 2018**

Ez 17: 22-24; 2 Cor 5: 6-10; Mk 4: 26-34

Today is Father’s Day, and I would imagine that nearly all the men present here are fathers, so I would like to speak to them all. Hopefully, what I say will also be of benefit to all the women and children.

Men, do you remember your son or daughter newly born? Of course you do. He or she was so small, helpless, and pleading, crying to be fed, to be held, to be warmed and wanted. You held your child in your arms, and at that moment you realized you had given life, the gift of life, and you anticipated fullness of life for your newborn. You desired that day, over and over again, that your son or daughter would live happily, contentedly, and securely. As the days passed, there was never a time in which you stopped wanting what was good for your child. Deep in your heart, somewhere, you kept thinking, “I want you to live. I love you. I will give you a good life.” Over and over again you wanted that small seed to grow into a majestic tree, as we heard in our readings today. You asked God to bless your child and to help you be a good father, a good giver of gifts. And when you made mistakes, you tried to do better.

As the years passed, what happened? You kept giving and giving to your son or daughter. You gave and didn’t take your gifts back. You kept up your efforts. You kept sowing good seed, as the Gospel says, on to the field of your child’s life. You kept sowing, and pruning, and fertilizing the soil. You kept nurturing your son or daughter. You kept loving and sacrificing and giving. You kept giving the gift of your life so your family would live, and you never asked for it back. You knew that one day you would appear before the judgment seat of Christ to render an account of your fatherhood. You did your best.

When your child became a man or a woman, and began and began to reach out to bad fruit in the world, you winced. You hurt for them. You worried. When everyone seemed to notice only your mistakes as a father, you felt misunderstood and it stung. When faced with ingratitude, you felt hurt, but you continued to do what you thought was right, and you held on to that original hope you had for your child the day he or she was born. You continued to hope your son or daughter would experience a full and happy life.

Is not all of this true? You can identify with it, can’t you?

Men, what I have just described is not only our experience as fathers, but it is God’s experience as Father. We are to be the kind of fathers to our children that God is to us. God is Father, and he constantly is fathering us. Never a moment passes when he is not fathering.

Just as we gave the gift of life to our children through our unity with our wives and in cooperation with God’s will, so too God gives life to all his sons and daughters in union with us, and he supports the life he gives. God’s gifts, once given, are irrevocable. He never takes them back. God’s greatest gift is the gift of life, and he will never take that gift from us. He is not the author of death, but he transforms death into eternal life. There is a great temptation in our world today, and it is an attack on fatherhood: to take someone’s life rather than give and sustain it. We fathers, like God, are to give life and sustain it.

God always, without ceasing, holds our lives in his hands, fathering us over and over again, saying “I give you life. I give you my Spirit. I desire you. I will you into life. I will you to live.” Over and over again, without ceasing. This is God’s fatherhood. This is his ultimate desire for us: fullness of life with him in eternity, to see him and know him.

God’s fatherhood is the model for us men to follow. He has written into our very DNA all the natural tools and dispositions. It is natural to be a good father. Not only that, but God has given us supernatural gifts to help our natural ones, especially the sacraments, the Church, our wives, and our friends.

Yes, we see the effects of our mistakes and failures and our sins. We are pained when our children drift away, and we ask “Why?” Without our faith in God’s fatherhood, we could easily conclude it is all just terribly unfair.

Yet, when we first saw our child that day, we experienced not failure or disappointment, *but life*. We had given the gift of life, a life which would extend into eternity. We knew that day that from nothing our child became a living, breathing human being. We could not deny our child’s life, or our own.

Fathers, defend the life you have given. Defend all human life, as God wills. Defend the life of your family; it is your responsibility. Continue to give life, never taking it. Sustain life, preserve it, and fight for it. Continue to be good fathers!