



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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June 16/17, Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Father's Day

Readings, Suggested Homily Notes, and Prayers of the Faithful

Reading 1

Ez 17:22-24

Thus says the Lord GOD:

I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar,
from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot,
and plant it on a high and lofty mountain;
on the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it.
It shall put forth branches and bear fruit,
and become a majestic cedar.
Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it,
every winged thing in the shade of its boughs.
And all the trees of the field shall know
that I, the LORD,
bring low the high tree,
lift high the lowly tree,
wither up the green tree,
and make the withered tree bloom.
As I, the LORD, have spoken, so will I do.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

R. (cf. 2a) Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, Most High,
To proclaim your kindness at dawn
and your faithfulness throughout the night.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

The just one shall flourish like the palm tree,
like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.
They that are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

They shall bear fruit even in old age;
vigorous and sturdy shall they be,
Declaring how just is the LORD,
my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Reading 2 **2 Cor 5:6-10**

Brothers and sisters:

We are always courageous,
although we know that while we are at home in the body
we are away from the Lord,
for we walk by faith, not by sight.
Yet we are courageous,
and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord.
Therefore, we aspire to please him,
whether we are at home or away.
For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,
so that each may receive recompense,
according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.

Gospel **Mk 4:26-34**

Jesus said to the crowds:

"This is how it is with the kingdom of God;
it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land
and would sleep and rise night and day
and through it all the seed would sprout and grow,
he knows not how.
Of its own accord the land yields fruit,
first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.
And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once,
for the harvest has come."

He said,

"To what shall we compare the kingdom of God,
or what parable can we use for it?
It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground,
is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth.
But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants
and puts forth large branches,
so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade."
With many such parables

he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it.
Without parables he did not speak to them,
but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

Suggested Homily Notes

The First Reading

Our first reading from Ezekiel reminds us that God is creator and Lord of all.
Ezekiel speaks of God sending Jesus (the “tender shoot”) to establish his kingdom on earth.
God reveals his love and care for us by sending his only Son to earth.
God the Father calls us to seek shelter in Christ.

The Second Reading

In our second reading, St. John calls us to be courageous.
He reminds us that: “We walk by faith, and not by sight.”
We are accountable for our actions: good and evil.

Gospel Reading

In today’s Gospel, Jesus provides another description of the kingdom of God.
Jesus uses a story that the crowd will understand.
The kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed, which, once planted, grows into a large tree.
The smallest of beginnings need not discourage us.
Jesus invites us to allow the kingdom of God to blossom and live in our hearts.

Father’s Day Reflections

Our readings today speak to us of God’s love and care for his children.
As our Father, God promises to:

- Care for us.
- Help us to grow.
- Guide us with justice.
- Be merciful.

God the Father gave up his only Son, Jesus Christ, so that we might be saved through him.
He provides an example of the very vocation of fatherhood.
Fathers are to sacrifice their lives for their families.

They do this by:

- Being the spiritual leader and guardian of their families.
- Praying for and with their families.
- Being a courageous witness to the Gospel.
- Providing care and support for their families.
- Serving as an example of goodness and truth.
- Leading with courage and accountability.
- Laying down one’s life for another.

Fathers are called in a special way to reflect God's unconditional love and forgiveness. Like God, they correct us when we sin but always pick us up when we fall. Like the farmer in the Gospel reading, relentlessly scattering his seeds "night and day," God will never give up on us.

Today, in a special way, let us be grateful for:

- Our fathers, by birth or adoption, who love us and support us through life.
- Our Church leaders, who take on the paternal role of guiding us through life.
- And God our Father, who will always teach justly and grant us boundless mercy.

Religious Liberty and Conscience Rights Reflections

Today, there seem to be government efforts to restrict our freedom in following the will of our heavenly Father.

Some want us to stay out of society and not engage the culture.

Some feel our teachings should be kept within the walls of the church.

Some tell us that we have no right to hire or help others outside our faith unless we are willing to compromise our beliefs and teachings.

Ezekiel reminds us that we need to remain courageous.

Despite threats to our religious freedom, we can take heart that there is nothing that earthly powers can do to restrict our interior freedom or our faith.

Blessings

Father's Day is a fitting day to ask God's special blessing on all fathers (see the *Book of Blessings* for options).

Various Suggested Prayers of the Faithful (Choose as many as appropriate)

For fathers:

That they be granted strength and courage to lead their families toward a deeper love for Jesus Christ;

We pray to the Lord.

For fathers who struggle:

That society might grow supportive and encouraging to them in their challenges;

We pray to the Lord.

For fathers who grieve and mourn, especially those who have lost a child before birth:

That they find consolation in God's promise of life;

We pray to the Lord.

For the fatherless:

That they be granted faithful and loving fatherly role models to help them grow in love for God our Heavenly Father;

We pray to the Lord.

For all married couples who are struggling with infertility:
That the Lord grant them peace as they hope for the gift of a child;
We pray to the Lord.

For all families:
That the freedom of all people to live out God's plan for life and love be protected and supported
in law;
We pray to the Lord.

For each of us gathered here:
That God might touch our hearts to forgive old resentments and heal damaged relationships;
We pray to the Lord.

For bishops, priests, and deacons and all who lead and teach the Catholic faith:
That they might remain courageous and steadfast in their efforts to speak out on behalf of
religious liberty;
We pray to the Lord.

For those called to heal and cure the sick and suffering:
That they might be free to sow the seeds of their faith without government intrusion;
We pray to the Lord.

For those called to lives of service:
May they be free to follow their faith in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of others;
We pray to the Lord.

For lawmakers:
That they might act justly and pass laws which promote and protect the fundamental rights of
conscience and religious liberty;
We pray to the Lord.

For all churches, agencies, employers, healthcare providers and individuals:
That they may be free from government mandates that would compel them to compromise their
beliefs;
We pray to the Lord.