

Dear Parish Family,

I would like to begin by wishing all the Moms a very Happy Mother's Day. I pray that, this day and every day, you will experience the love and appreciation of your families.

Pope John Paul II referred to the family as the "Domestic Church," or the Church in miniature. According to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "The family, is so to speak, the domestic church." (Lumen Gentium #11) This means that it is in the context of the family that we first learn who God is and to prayerfully seek His will for us.

On January 5, 1964, Pope Paul VI visited Nazareth, the home of the Holy Family. In his remarks he said, "May Nazareth serve as a model of what the family should be. May it show us the family's holy and enduring character and exemplify its basic function in society: a community of love and sharing, beautiful for the problems it poses and the rewards it brings, in sum, the perfect setting for rearing children – and for this there is no substitute."

Like families, Church communities are places where Christ is experienced and our faith is put into action. Still, we know from experience that both family life and Church life has its own set of challenges.

As we continue our journey through the Easter season, the Sunday readings present us with a portrait of life in the early Church. The Church will grow and expand from humble beginnings in Palestine to the very heart of the empire – Rome itself. It can appear that all is well. It can appear that there is nothing but harmony among the early Christians.

Today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles (6:1-7) tells a different story. The Hellenists were most likely Palestinian Jews who spoke only Greek. The Hebrews were Palestinian Jews who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and who may also have spoken Greek. The Hellenists felt that "their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution." They were being short-changed in terms food, money, etc. Just like in family life or parish life, there can be conflicts.

We know that the Church will be in conflict with the world. It always has been and always will be. We are to be in the world but not of the world. It's more painful when there is conflict within the Church community. So what's the answer?

The first reading tells us that the Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, discerned a solution. To address the temporal needs of the faithful, the community would select "seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom," whom the Apostles would appoint to that task. These were the first Deacons - one of the three ministries of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Apostles prayed over them and laid hands on them, thereby ordaining them for this ministry.

A moment of conflict had become a moment of transformation, healing and grace. When we experience conflict, do we stop, pause and ask for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit? The

Apostles teach us a great lesson. It can be very tempting to react with suspicion and hostility in the face of conflict. Instead, we can choose to see an opportunity – an opportunity for positive change – an opportunity to open new doors and to experience the reconciliation that God wants for all of us.

We can dig our heels in or we can acknowledge that we don't have all the answers and that we're not always right. Humility acknowledges the need to go to God first – to ask for God's grace and God's wisdom.

Immediately following this passage from the Acts of the Apostles, the following line of scripture says, "Now Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great signs among the people (Acts 6:8)." When we place ourselves under God's command, great things can happen in our lives – in our homes, our families, our churches and in our relationships.

On this Mother's Day, the 5th Sunday of Easter, may we allow the grace of God to penetrate more deeply into our families – into the Domestic Church.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your generous support of our parish family. Please check out our website for information regarding online giving and for information on the Church's response to the Coronavirus. Let's continue to pray for an end to this pandemic. I sincerely hope that we can gather as a parish family for Holy Mass in person and in our Church. May God bless you and your loved ones with good spiritual and physical health.

Fr. Dan Redmond