

Dear People of God,

Hillsboro, June 12, 2020

June speaks of new life – life blossoming all around us. The days are getting longer and the stay-at-home ban is slowly moving into the next phase. Though we are tired and stressed do we take enough time to tell those we love that we love them? The following powerful story should help all of us keep life in balance. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us!

### **Who I Am Makes a Difference**

A teacher in New York decided to honor each of her high school seniors by telling them the difference they each made. She called each student to the front of the class, one at a time. First she told each of them how they had made a difference to her and the class. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon imprinted with gold letters that read, “Who I Am Makes a Difference.”

Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact recognition would have on the community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons and instructed them to go out and spread this acknowledgement ceremony. Then they were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom and report back to the class in about a week.

One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company and honored him for helping him with his career planning. He gave him a blue ribbon and put it on his shirt. Then he gave him two extra ribbons and said, “We’re doing a class project on recognition, and we’d like you to go out, find somebody to honor, give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra blue ribbon so they can acknowledge a third person to keep this acknowledgement ceremony going. Then please report back to me and tell me what happened.”

Later that day the junior executive went in to see his boss, who had been noted, by the way, as being kind of a grouchy fellow. He sat his boss down and told him that he deeply admired him for being a creative genius. The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon and would he give him permission to put it on him. His surprised boss said, “Well, sure.” The junior executive took the blue ribbon and placed it right on the boss’s jacket, above his heart.

As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, “Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra one and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbon is doing a project in school and we want to keep this recognition ceremony going and find out how it affects people.” That night the boss came home to his 14-year-old son and sat him down. He said, “The most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office and one of the junior executives came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I’m a creative genius. Then he put this blue ribbon that says “Who I Am Makes a Difference” on my jacket above my heart. He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find someone else to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about you. My days are really hectic and when I come home I don’t pay a lot of

attention to you. Sometimes I scream at you for not getting good enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess, but somehow tonight, I just wanted to sit here and, well, just let you know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You're a great kid and I love you."

The startled boy started to sob and sob, and he wouldn't stop crying. His whole body shook. He looked up at his father and said through his tears, "Dad, earlier tonight I sat in my room and wrote a letter to you and Mom explaining why I had run away and asking for your forgiveness. I just didn't think that you cared at all. The letter is upstairs. I don't think I need it after all." His father walked upstairs and found a heartfelt letter full of anguish and pain. The envelope was addressed, "Mom and Dad."

The boss went back to work a changed man. He was no longer a grouch, but made sure to let all his employees know that they made a difference.

The junior executive helped several other young people with career planning and never forgot to let them know that they made a difference in his life . . . one being the boss's son.

And the young boy and his classmates learned a valuable lesson.

Who you are DOES make a difference.

Pass it on . . .

We continue to battle COVID-19. There are signs of moving into the next phase. We are all tired and want to slowly return to some resemblance of normalcy. However, we are in the process of creating a new normal. I will stress again – God is with us and always choose as we move forward: Peace over panic. Faith over fear. Wisdom over worry.

Walking with you,

Father Casey