

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (6/14-15/2008)

Exodus 19/2-6, Psalm 100, Romans 5/6-11, Matthew 9/36-10/8

Do the Scriptures have anything specific to offer us on this Fathers' Day weekend?

"Of course not," you might say, "Fathers' Day is only a recent innovation in our civil calendar."

But, as with so much in our modern life, the Scriptures can provide us with necessary and valuable insights.

Take today's first reading for example.

God reminds Moses on Mt. Sinai how He has treated this chosen people.

He freed them from the oppressive slavery of Egypt and He says: "*I bore you up on eagles' wings and brought you here to myself.*"

Sometimes the eagle will bear her nestlings aloft on her wings; sometimes she will protect them beneath those outspread wings.

The eagle's care for her young is a symbol of God's care for His people, for you and me.

Certainly an apt image for how fathers and mothers care for their young.

In St. Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul reminds his readers of the love of Jesus for all of us:

"Only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

That is divine, unconditional love which excludes no one, not even the worst sinner.

We have the example of so many fathers who love their children and their family from the outset, no matter what they say or do. Fathers would give their lives for their families.

Finally in the Gospel reading, with deep compassion, Jesus looks upon the crowds that surround him because they are so troubled and abandoned.

He then proceeds to do something about their isolation, their despair.

He sends out his chosen Twelve, including Judas Iscariot who would betray him, to bring them the Good News that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Not only information, but God's power as well: "*Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons.*"

Jesus' compassion is demonstrated in a very practical way, like the practical and practiced way our fathers take care of our needs.

In *Genesis 1*, it is said that God made man and women in His own image, male and female.

Ever since, fathers and mothers have been striving to demonstrate creative love for their children who will be formed in their image and likeness.

Yes, the Scriptures are full of metaphors, exhortations and examples of God's love – and of human love motivated to imitate that divine compassion.

So, on this Fathers' Day, we honor the presence of God's love exemplified so aptly in the lives of our fathers, living and dead.

We know that our fathers, like all of us, are only very rarely perfect beings.

Believe it or not, they have faults and weaknesses, which are sometimes glaring.

What does that prove but that we all continue to need God's love and God's forgiveness.

God loves; we benefit. Fathers love, we benefit.

Happy Fathers' Day to all!