

Today's Gospel picks up just after Jesus is telling his Disciples about the disruptions that will come and the persecutions they will suffer as they spread the good news in his name. (*Mt 10:16-25*) Today Jesus speaks to them and to us; "Do not Be Afraid". We have no need to fear the physical. Pain, hunger, illness, even death are not to be feared. If we truly believe what we profess every time we say the Creed, even death should not be a deterrent that keeps us from practicing our faith. With our faith we live in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The goal of our existence is to experience the loving embrace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ as he welcomes us into the gates of heaven.

Of course it isn't that easy is it? Our lives are precious to God and therefore they should be precious to us as well. There are appropriate situations in life where men and women risk their lives. Those times where people subordinate their safety, their lives, accepting risk because they care for others more than they care about themselves. In those acts they tie themselves to the Cross through selfless love and have no need to fear, yet they still do because our lives are precious to us.

The one thing we should to fear is Satan and his minions. The devil continues to prowl the earth trying to devour our souls. If he can't get us in a single bite, he is more than willing to nibble at the edges until he has accomplished his mission.

What can we do to stop him? He and his minions are fallen angels, twisted and emboldened by hate built up over the ages since time began. They are much more powerful, much more devious, have more practice in enticing us into sin than we want to contemplate.

The answer is in relying on Jesus to have our backs. He has given us Angels to guard our way, appointed Angels to battle the forces of evil, provides us with the prayers and intercessions of those who have gone before us. He prays for us, his Mother, our Mother prays for us, the Saints and all the Souls in Purgatory who have reached heaven by our prayers pray for us. A heavenly army that is much more powerful than all the denizens of hell.

But where do we learn to access the Army of Heaven? Who is responsible for teaching us how to reach out and ask for their help? Most of us

immediately default to the Magisterium of the Church, the Clergy and Catechists as the answer. That is partly correct, but only partly.

Parents are the ones who have the primary responsibility of raising their 'children according to God's Law and his Church.' That is one of the promises that you made at your wedding and as parents you renewed at each child's Baptism.

Most of us, and that included me at one time; think that it is the mother's task to lead the family's spiritual life. It is an easy error to fall into. Mothers tend to spend the most time with our children. Generally they are much better at nurturing the little ones than men. Our children's first life skills are usually taught to them by their mothers.

Then we have the example of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. For some reason we think of Saint Joseph as the silent partner, the one relegated to the physical, keeping the family safe and earning a living. As we contemplate the holiness of Jesus and Mary, we tend to see Saint Joseph as coming in a distant third, sort of hanging on their coat tails.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The head of Holy Family's household is Saint Joseph. The one responsible for the spiritual health of Jesus and Mary was Saint Joseph. It was his responsibility to ensure that Jesus was presented in the Temple for his circumcision. His responsibility to see the Sabbath was properly observed, his responsibility to ensure that Jesus was educated in the Hebrew Faith and Traditions. Did Mary assist? Of course she did, but the responsibility rested on Joseph, not on her.

Fast forward to today. In this age of everything goes, the value of the nuclear family, Father, Mother and Children, has never been greater. Although some people, societies, and even entire nations have tried to degrade and eliminate the value of the nuclear family over the past 75 years, all that their efforts have accomplished is to reaffirm the wisdom and beauty of God's plan for the family.

Too often we find the family unit fractured and broken, even here in the Church. Divorce, deployments, and death all contribute to one parent families. Families where one person has to fill both roles; families that are broken, either temporarily or permanently, families who need our support.

But we can't help someone else if we don't have our own house in order. Gentlemen, it is time to man-up. Time to acknowledge and accept our

responsibility before God and our families. Our responsibilities go beyond the physical requirements of a safe home, food and drink on the table, occasionally coaching some sports and saving for college.

We have spiritual responsibilities as well. It is our responsibility to lead our families in prayer. Not just Grace at meals but the Rosary and other Catholic devotions. It is our responsibility to set the moral and ethical standards and example for our family. It is our responsibility to ensure that our family keeps the Sabbath, to worship here in the house of God, not just when there are classes for the children, but throughout the entire year.

We all want our children to be successful and to have a better life than we have had. But the best, the most important thing that we can do for them is to prepare them and help them to develop their relationship with God; to lead them onto the path to salvation. Then with the Grace of God we will be there to greet our children after they pass through Jesus Christ and enter into the joys of heaven.