

Sunday, August 26, 2023

#Homily by Father Karl Daigle

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A-2023

Bread for the Journey

My dad was a good person and father. He was a man of virtue and integrity. At the same time, I did not always understand or appreciate how he exercised authority within the family. He was not abusive, but he exercised it in ways that led me to be uncomfortable with and even reject authority. In fact, in distancing myself from it, I unfortunately went to the opposite extreme and became too lenient.

I lived into this truth the first time I was fully responsible for a dog. Her name was Brittany, and she was a beautiful blonde and white Border Collie. She was an adorable and spirited puppy. Since I was resistant to exercising authority, she began to display this attitude like she was the boss. One day she looked at me like, "I own you, Daddy." When I caught that look, something immediately changed within me. I held her down to convey that I was the authority figure in the relationship. From that day onward, I treated her with great love but also with fair and, if needed, firm boundaries. What really surprised me was she came to love and respect me even more than before.

That was eye-opening for me. I discovered that by rejecting authority, I had gone too far to the opposite end of the spectrum. I realized that authority was necessary. The key was expressing it in a balanced way, being both respectful and establishing boundaries.

The Sacred Scriptures, including our readings today, reveal that God is supportive of both personal and spiritual authority. In the Book of Genesis, God gives human authority over all of creation. Ideally, we are to rule the world with deference to the revealed will and principles of God.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ proclaims: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." As a people of faith, we are called to live our lives in obedience to the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ. We do this by allowing Him to reign in our hearts and in every facet of our lives without exception. He reigns in our hearts when we are faithful to the inspired Word of God that comes to us through the Sacred Scriptures and the teachings of our Catholic faith on matters of faith and morality.

After Jesus revealed His ultimate authority, He did something totally amazing. He shared it with His disciples. Eventually, He shared His authority with us through Baptism. Through Baptism, we come to personally share in His authority to love, heal, serve, teach, and lead. We do this according to the vocation and calling we have received from God. Each of us, in our own unique way, exercises the authority of being in partnership with Jesus Christ.

God, through the Bible, calls us to respect and obey authority. We are also called to pray for them. That does not mean that we cannot engage in mature dialogue and express differences of opinion. Yet, in the end, we are called to submit to rightful authority unless we are asked to do something illegal, immoral, or unethical. In fact, we will ultimately be judged by God on our fidelity or infidelity to those who exercise authority over us on a personal and spiritual level.

Since we are a people of faith, our use of authority is always both personal and spiritual. Within the family, parents are called to use their God-given authority to bring about the formation of their children concerning issues of body, mind, heart, and soul. They are to seek to form their children as whole persons. This involves formation in life skills, relationships, manners, discipline, and having a servant's heart.

The most important form of God-given authority provided to parents is spiritual authority. They are to use this authority to cultivate an environment where God and the will of God are seen as the most important reality and

relationship in their lives. Within this family faith culture, prayer, the mass, the Bible, the teachings of our Catholic Christian faith, and the importance of virtue are taught and practiced.

Historically, mothers have carried the load when it comes to exercising spiritual authority within the family. They have done an astounding job! Even though their motherly contributions have been priceless, recent studies reveal the importance of fathers taking an active role in spiritual leadership. When they do, there is an 80-90% greater chance that faith will be valued and practiced by the children. There is something about the father's participation. Fathers, I invite you to step up and become actively involved in the spiritual leadership of your families. When fathers and mothers exercise spiritual leadership together, the seeds of faith are much more likely to fall on fertile soil within the souls of their children.

Parents, you will ultimately be responsible to God for how you have exercised spiritual leadership with your children. Please never forget that God is rich in grace and mercy. He realizes you cannot press rewind. He doesn't expect you to. All He expects is for you to acknowledge your mistakes and negligence of the past with humble and contrite hearts. In the present moment and going forward, he calls you to be a positive spiritual and moral force in the lives of your children.

Husbands and wives, you are also called to exercise spiritual leadership within your marriage. Encourage each other to pray and read the Bible. Encourage each other to go to church and confession. Encourage each to be a loving and giving person. Encourage each other to cultivate virtue and eliminate vice. Encourage each other to seek deliverance from inner demons. Strive to be an inspirational and motivational witness by the way you love the Lord and one another.

You will ultimately be judged by God for the efforts you make in helping each other grow in Christ and in helping each other work out your eternal salvation.

For those who are bosses of any kind, you have been given personal and spiritual authority over the people who work with you and under you. You have the responsibility to set the professional, relational, and spiritual climate. Use your authority to emphasize and model the centrality of hard work, striving for excellence, treating others with dignity and respect, and paying fair wages. Set the standard for how others need to be talked to or talked about. Eliminate the damaging and toxic effects of gossip, bullying, and exclusion. Even if you are unable to talk directly in Christian terms, create a culture where the workplace is permeated by Christian virtues. Create an environment where they are celebrated and esteemed. The same is true if you are the head of a team or committee. God will ultimately judge you on the efforts you make to exercise leadership in a manner that helps others to be better workers, people, and Christians.

Even if we are not a spouse, parent, boss, or in charge of a group, through our baptism, we are still called to exercise our personal and spiritual authority through our daily encounters with other people. Do we inspire and respectfully challenge another person to be a better worker, family member, friend, and/or #Christian? Since we are called to be the "salt of the earth and the light of the world," God will judge us on the efforts we make to use our influence to make a positive difference in the life of another person or in communities. As Uncle Ben liked to tell his nephew Peter Parker in the movie "Spider-Man:" "With great power comes great responsibility."

The Christian movie "War Room" reminds us of the truth that just exercising our personal and spiritual authority is not enough. In the movie, an elderly lady named Miss Clara is a woman of deep faith. She is a big believer in the power of #prayer. She has a closet that she designates as her prayer room. She calls it her war room because it is there she goes to battle for her soul and the souls of other people.

And from the war room, healing, transformation, and miracles eventually take place in her life and those for whom she prays. As we exercise our personal and spiritual authority, may we habitually enter into our war room so we and those we serve may experience growing personal, spiritual, and moral victories. That is why when praying the

#NiceneCreed at Mass, we profess belief in the communion of saints. We all need one another! We need each other personally and spiritually!

#MaryQueenOfPeace 📞 Please call the Church Office at (318) 752-5971 for more information.