Happy Father’s Day to all fathers, grandfathers, and stepfathers. Five weeks ago, we observed Mother’s Day and offered Mass for our mothers. Today, on this Father’s Day, we are doing the same offering our dads, living or dead, on the altar of God during this Holy Mass and invoking our Heavenly Father’s blessings on them.

The Father’s role in society: According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the vital importance of the father’s role comes from the fact that, with his wife, he cooperates with God the Creator in bringing a new human life into the world. Children who are raised with fathers present in the family have much lower rates of delinquency, drug and alcohol use, teen pregnancy, and so on, than those with absent fathers. The father’s presence is also a significant positive factor in the children’s getting a college education, finding a satisfying job, and making a lasting marriage. A girl’s choice of partner and satisfaction in marriage is often directly related to the relationship she has had with her father.

A day to remember our Heavenly Father: Father’s Day is a day to remember, acknowledge and appreciate the “World’s Greatest Dad,” OUR HEAVENLY FATHER (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6) Who is our spiritual Daddy, actively involved in all areas of our lives. It is He on Whom we lean in times of pain and hurt; it is He on Whom we call in times of need; it is He Who provides for us in all ways practical, emotional, and spiritual. Many of us pray the “Our Father” day after day, without paying attention to, or experiencing, the love and providence of our Heavenly Father. Let us pray the Our Father during this Holy Mass, realizing the meaning of each word and experiencing the love of our Heavenly Father for us. May all earthly fathers draw strength from their Heavenly Father!

Today’s readings call us to preach Christ through our words and lives without fear. The first reading tells us how the prophet Jeremiah trusted in the power of God, while he faced opposition for his prophetic ministry. In the second reading, Paul assures the Christians in Rome that they need not be afraid of opposition because they share in the death of Jesus and his Resurrection and because they are united with Christ, the new Adam, in his Resurrection.

Today’s Gospel passage is taken from the end of Jesus’ instruction to the Twelve apostles as he sends them forth in pairs to prepare the people for His own coming, giving them a share in
His own powers of miraculous healing. He instructs them to live simply and to expect opposition and rejection. After having predicted future opposition and persecution, Jesus encourages his disciples to stand firm. Three times they are urged, “Do not fear!” “Do not be afraid!” Instead of shrinking from their task, they are to proclaim the Gospel boldly because they will be protected, just as Jeremiah was assured of God’s protection.

So, Jesus commands his disciples not to fear their persecutors. He presents before them the image of the sparrow to reinforce the disciples’ trust and Hope in God. The readings hint at the opposition the Apostles themselves would meet, and we future Christians will encounter as we carry on the work of Jesus in the world, and they encourage us to persevere in doing the work of Jesus. They assure us that we will be successful despite the opposition we encounter.

We need not be afraid: Sometimes we are afraid that we will make a wrong decision. At other times, we are afraid of what others will think when we speak up for Jesus. We are afraid of what the future will bring our children. We are also afraid of growing old. Sometimes we are afraid of what bad health will bring us. At the root of these fears is the fear of loss. Every fear we have is grounded in the knowledge that we have something or someone to lose. I can lose my job, family, house, money, health and even life itself.

Rejection and loss are the foundation of our fears. But we forget one thing: whatever trouble or crisis affects us; we know that God understands it better than we ourselves do. Our Heavenly Father knows exactly what is happening. What a release from fear it is to know that God is on our side; that our life is in the hands of a loving God! The next time fear grips our life, we need to remember that being faithful to Christ wherever we meet him in this life is much more important than our fear of rejection and loss.

Also let us take a moment to recall some of the great promises of God. Let us remind ourselves that God cares – we are each a dear child of His, and He cares for each of us. “Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” The last verse of Psalm 27 sums it up nicely: “Trust in the Lord. Have Faith; do not despair. Trust in the Lord.”