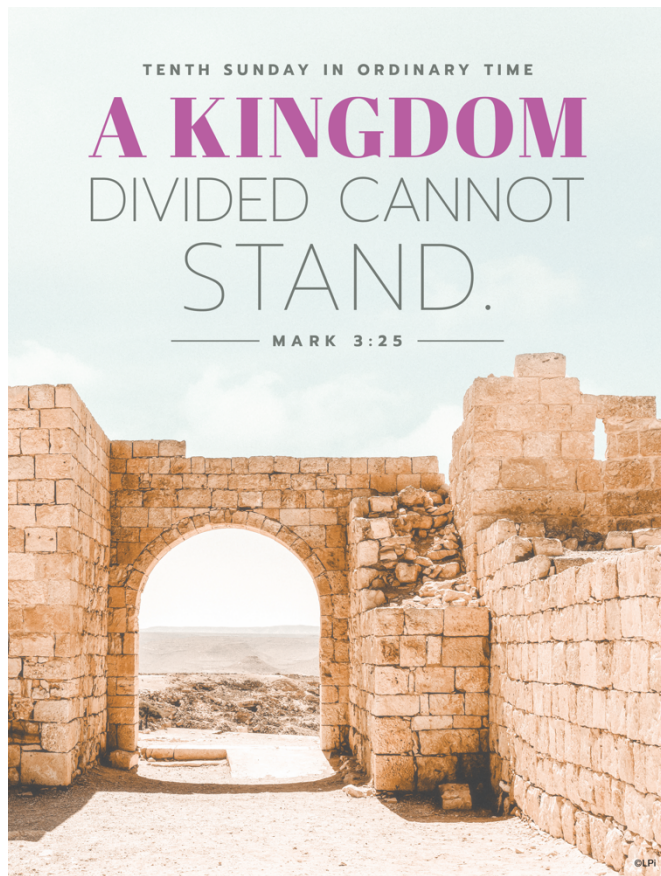


Father Ed's Homily for June 9

These sayings of Jesus in today's Gospel reading: "IF A KINGDOM IS DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, THAT KINGDOM CANNOT STAND. AND IF A HOUSE IS DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, THAT HOUSE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO STAND," reminds me of the phrase, "UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL." From our personal life experiences and research, we do know that when individuals come together, they can accomplish great things that they could not have done alone.



This phrase reminds us of the fundamental truth that unity and collaboration are strong forces that every family and society needs if they want to achieve great things in life. It is very sad that our country is full of divisions. Our families are also not immune from this division. Where there is no unity except conflicts, we see a breakup in some families. Even in today's Gospel reading, you sense a tension in Jesus' family. St. Mark tells us that Jesus came home with his disciples and there was such a big crowd gathered around him that it was impossible for Jesus and his disciples to have meal. Listen to what his relatives said about Jesus: "HE IS OUT OF HIS MIND." Are you surprised to read about this comment from Jesus' relatives? It seems his relatives tried to control his

ministry, and since Jesus refused to follow their directives, they said he is out of his mind. Perhaps you might have experienced this "destructive criticism" from your family also when you are doing God's work that they don't understand or fail to appreciate. You see, you are not alone. Jesus went through it also, and you, as his follower, will experience it also. Remember, what Jesus said in the Beatitudes: "BLESSED ARE THEY WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." Don't give up living your life for Christ. He is always with you. He has a place for you in his heavenly kingdom.

You see it also in our Catholic church community sometimes between traditional/conservative Catholics and progressive Catholics. Let us pray for our Catholic Church that we will live in unity. Jesus saw this division/conflict that would adversely affect his followers when he prayed to his heavenly Father: "MY PRAYER IS NOT FOR THEM ALONE, THAT ALL OF THEM MAY BE ONE, FATHER, JUST AS YOU

ARE IN ME AND I AM IN YOU. I HAVE GIVEN THEM THE GLORY THAT YOU GAVE ME” - John 17:20-23. Let us also make this prayer of Jesus our daily prayer.

In the “Liberty Song” composed by a founding father, John Dickenson, we are reminded of the importance of unity for our country: “THEN JOIN HAND IN HAND, BRAVE AMERICANS ALL! BY UNITING, WE STAND, BY DIVIDING WE FALL.” He is right ! We know from history that a country that doesn’t stand together will certainly fall.

Satan, aware of the power of unity and collaboration, tried to destroy it by instigating our first parents, Adam and Eve, to disobey God. In the first reading, we are told how this unity/harmony that existed between God and humanity was destroyed by Satan. When God questioned Adam about why he disobeyed him? Adam blamed God and the woman, Eve, he gave to him. Then when God questioned Eve, she also blamed the weakest one, the snake. They refused to take personal responsibility for their sins.

My dear people of God, it is very unfortunate/sad that this kind of attitude of our first parents can be found today also in us. Some of us, if not all, always project our failures/sins onto others and not ourselves. Modern psychology and other social science disciplines also promote this failure to take personal responsibility and accountability for our actions. For instance, some psychologists claim kids are having abnormal behaviors because they were abused by their parents. While there may be some truth in this, we do know that greater parts of what we are today can be attributed to personal causes, not so much from eternal causes like parents, etc. Fellow parishioners, how we can build a healthy family, society, church community when we do not promote unity and harmony? It is time for us to go back to the early Christian community, where they lived in unity--prayed together, ate together, and shared things in common that there was no needy person in the community - Acts 2:46-47. Because they lived in unity and peace, many people came to join them. Let us all examine our lives and see things that destroy unity and harmony in our lives and that of our family/society and get rid of it.

Since we have the same Holy Spirit St. Paul talks about in the second reading, we can build God’s kingdom here on earth. We need to take personal responsibility for our actions and learn to promote unity and harmony in our world. As someone said, it is great to have the Statue of Liberty on the East coast, but we should also have the Statue of Responsibility on the West coast. That is to say, that both Liberty/Freedom and Responsibility go hand in hand. One can’t have one without the other.

Let us always remember that: “UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.” Yes, it is true that individuals coming together can accomplish great things throughout everyday life that can’t be achieved by you alone.