

A Short Teaching on Family Fights
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Readings: JER 38:4-6, 8-10; PS 40:2, 3, 4, 18; HEB 12:1-4; LK 12:49-53

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (LK 12:49).

I must tell you I love this reading. It is both painful and wonderful. My own extended family suffers from this problem so I am very attuned to this teaching. This statement of Jesus can be thought of as the equal to the miracle at the wedding of Cana. In the Gospel of John and the Wedding at Cana, Jesus restores marriages with the miracle of water to wine (Jn 2:1:11).

Jesus offers the restoration of our families - through the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Who is the head of the household of five in the example? Not God, if it were there would be no division, only unity. Precisely, the point Jesus is making. Jesus wants the Holy Spirit (the fire of God's love) to be the Rabbi (leader of the five) of your family. When the Holy Spirit is the leader the division that is already present is revealed in order to be healed.

How are we sometimes bound to one another – in love or in division? This is the great opportunity to crack open, repair and reconnect through holiness! Jesus wants to expose the division that there may be restoration.

Father and Son bound together by rivalry and bitterness? Let the fire of Jesus burn away these bonds and restore them in unity and dignity.

Mother and Daughter bound together by hurt and jealousy? Let the fire of Jesus burn away these bonds and restore them in forgiveness and community.

Mother-In-Law and Daughter-In-Law bound together by possessiveness and territory? Let the fire of Jesus burn away these bonds and restore them in charity and forbearance.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, grant us and our family Your gift of healing. May this healing bring our family wholeness in body, mind and soul and make us Your instrument to bring healing to others by our prayers. Amen.

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry