



## WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

This column is entitled, Letter From The Pastor, but this week I feel it falls under the heading of ***A Father Speaks To His Family***. We are a wonderful parish family, but like all families we face challenges and problems. It's good and healthy from time to time to step back and take a look at what we are doing and how we are doing.

This weekend, we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, which, among other truths, observes the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Next weekend, we celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. These together proclaim the beginning of the Church. While God is always with us and guiding us, this means that now, it's up to us. It's our calling to put into practice the Good News.

So, how are we doing? I say we are doing great, but there's always room for improvement. I do notice that at times we can be like a pinball machine, where people and ministries bounce off each other. If I were to give a heading to this column, I would call it, Entitlement vs. Ministry. Basically, entitlement is not ministry, and even works against it. Entitlement is inward directed, while ministry is outward directed. And, it harms evangelization and welcoming.

The simplest example is one that we speak about at our carnival core committee meetings. Our motto, and our charge to all volunteers, is that we should never say to someone that they are not needed. That discourages a volunteer and chases them away. To say to someone that they are not needed reflects entitlement. It means that this is my job and I don't need or want anyone else. The focus is then on myself, not ministry. In reality someone may be doing a certain job, even for years, and doing it very well. That's not the point. The point is the focus. We do it, not for ourselves, but for the Lord and for the parish. As humans, we have to fight a temptation to possessiveness. That leads to entitlement.

Another example, at times makes me laugh, and at others makes me cry. It is the temptation to turf wars. As humans we become possessive of space, which includes buildings, closets, and objects that are used. Again, the point is not that we don't need to have boundaries and private space. The point is attitude. The point is to share. In other words, we're all working for the same team. That's the point of our motto, Many Ministries/One Mission. We share a common goal, and so we should also share resources.

In a way, these are small things, but in a way they are not. Ultimately, we are in the business of proclaiming Jesus. We can detract from that if we seek to make the focus ourselves. Tragically, the Church has suffered severely because of those clergy who had a feeling of entitlement. They were self-focused, but not God focused. They were self-serving, not serving. That is an extreme example and not at all what I mean here. It just can serve as a sobering reminder. Ministry is not a competition and it's not one ministry or person vs. another. The bottom line: We're all in this together and we need to work with one another.

At the same time, there are many more examples of doing just that, cooperating, working together and helping one another. That's what it's all about. We can think of the classic example of an Amish barn raising. While that's not our culture, it should be our spirit.

***“But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28)***