

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade Mass**  
**February 12, 2018**

So, you are 5<sup>th</sup> graders now! That's wonderful! You are growing more in the Lord and in life. You know things now that you didn't know before. You are being trusted with more responsibilities and more important things! We are so proud of you, and we are especially proud of you for expressing your love of others and your faith. You know that prayer and faith are important. And do you know what else? We trust you to be good witnesses to our faith. You are good daughters and sons of God, you are our good brothers and sisters. We are so happy that you are out there showing the love of God to the world.

The Church is trusting you with a big concept today in the readings. Are you ready to learn something very important to our life of faith? Okay, here we go. Jesus gives a challenge to the disciples in Mark's Gospel. He gives that same challenge to all of us, and to each of you. He says: "Guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." That's a pretty weird phrase, isn't it? The "leaven of the Pharisees." What does that mean? It has to do with what the Pharisees were doing in those days. They were people who knew the bible very well. They knew the words to say, and they were very good at acting holy. But they would tear others down all the time. They would judge people unfairly. They would call people out instead of trying to love them. They would cause divisions in the world. This is what Jesus was talking about. He was warning his disciples not to be those kinds of people.

**This is what he is telling all of us right here at this Mass, too. There are a lot of people who know a lot of things about God and about the faith, but they do not live like people of love. They act with no love and care for others. Have you seen people like this? They are always mad or annoyed. They do not have any peace in their hearts. Jesus is telling us to be better than this.**

**My dear friends, you are good and holy people. Never let go of your love for others. There are many things in life that make us scared or worried. A lot of times we will feel annoyed with other people. But we are Christians! We are people who have faith! God will always be there for us, so we do not have to be afraid. Don't let yourselves be people who hurt others with anger and judgement. Be people who look out for those who are hurting. Be people who are willing to hear the other person's side before making up your mind about them. That is the message for today.**

**We are starting Lent tomorrow. Lent is a time to work at the important things in our faith. So, let's work on this together, okay. We can learn how to do this from Pope Francis. He said: "When I see a bad thing in someone – do I go defend him? Go pray and defend him before the Father as Jesus does. Pray for him, but do not judge!" We can help people more by loving them than by acting like the Pharisees. You can be people of love. We trust you, my sisters and brothers.**

**I ask our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe to pray for all of you during this wonderful season of Lent. May you grow in love and kindness. That way, we will be ready to celebrate Easter well. Have a great Lent, my friends.**