22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time: 8/28/22—5:00 PM, 9:30 and 11:30 AM

(the jingling of keys) Keys. Did you know that keys go back some six thousand years, back to the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians? What I have here are my car keys and the keys that let me into my office in the Parish Office downstairs. Sometimes I feel as if I am trying to get into Fort Knox when I try to get into my office because I need three keys to do so. Within a matter of no more than ten feet, I need to use this key to get through our outside door. Then I need this one to get through the inner office door. Then I need this one to get into my own office. Three keys in no more than ten feet; Fort Knox!

In thinking about these three keys, it struck me that there are three other keys that are infinitely more important than these three keys, for those other three keys enable us to find true joy, the joy of the Lord, the joy knowing the Father’s love for us.

What is the first of those other three keys? It’s the one that today’s reading from Sirach and from Jesus in Matthew speak about: humility. What is humility? It’s the realization that everything is a gift, a gift from God. What is there that we haven’t first of all received from God? Our life is a gift from God. Every breath that we breathe is a gift from God. Every beat of our heart. Every sunrise and every sunset. Every morsel of food. The ability to hear, to see, to taste, to touch, everything is a gift from God because what could we have ever done to earn any of them? Nothing! So everything is a gift from God.

The second of those other three keys is gratitude. What is to be our natural response when we realize that everything is gift? What can it be but to always shout from the tops of our lungs: thank you! Thank you, God, for the incredible miracles we enjoy as creatures on this Earth! But what are all of these things for which we are grateful but arrows, spiritual neon lights, pointing us beyond ourselves. For this reason, I really like the words of St. Hildegard of Bingen who, in the thirteenth century, said ***“Every creature is a*glittering, glistening mirror*of Divinity.”*** Gratitude then points us to the third key, the key of faith.

Like this key on my keyring gets me through the outside Parish Office door and this key gets me through the inside Parish Office door, I still need this key that admits me into my own personal Promised Land: my own office where all my stuff is. So too these two keys of humility and gratitude lead us to the third spiritual key: faith. Faith enables us to see that this same God, to whom we need to be grateful and thankful, just doesn’t tolerate us as little urchins in the vastness of space. No, though we are but specs of dust living on a speck of dust we call planet “Earth,” God, by having his Son pour out his life and love for us, has made us, who are but little bitty specs microscopic dust in the vastness of the Universe, to be his very own sons and daughters whom he encourages us to call “Abba,” the Hebrew word for “Dad.” Think of the irony of that statement: we little bitty humans huddled on this one piece planetary dust we call Earth have been made worthy and able to call the Creator of the whole universe our “Dad” and to share his divine life with him for all eternity. How can every word out of our mouths not be “thanks” and “praise”? Well, for one very simple reason: we can lose the keys of humility, gratitude, and faith just as much as I can and have lost these keys; we forget where we have put them, and we lose them.

What do we need to do? We need to do what we do with our other keys: we need to put them in plain sight so we don’t forget where they are. When I don’t have these vestments on, you probably have seen the “key pal” I have on my belt. That “key pal” has come to my rescue many, many times as I needed to get through a locked door. How do we put those spiritual keys in plain sight? It’s simple, by using them regularly, that is, by taking time regularly to be humble realizing that everything is a gift from God; by taking time throughout the day to be grateful to the One who is the source of it all; and, most especially, by growing in our awareness of the fact that, as St. Hildegard of Bingen says, ***“Every creature is* a glittering, glistening mirror*of Divinity,***” pointing us to the One who loves us more than we love ourselves.