

**Fathers' Day lets us honor the men who shoulder the responsibilities of family life. Any more it's a day that makes some children angry and others very proud. Increasing is the number of deadbeat dads, those who no longer provide adequate financial and emotional support for their kids. People who have a father of honorable character should count their blessings. After a couple of kids most fathers will tell you they didn't know what they were getting themselves into. It's at that point when the real test of character comes.**

**In today's gospel the disciples are just figuring out what they've gotten themselves into. Jesus asks them who they think he is. When Peter answers, "the Messiah," it's like he's unlocked a stubborn door to a very dark room. He's happy he found the right key, but he's not so sure that opening the door was such a good idea after all. Jesus asks the disciples to be quiet about Peter's insight. Then he predicts his suffering, death, and resurrection. That's not all. He says to them, "If you want to become my followers, deny yourselves, take up a cross every day and follow me. And if you want to save your life, get ready to lose it." At this point Peter was probably tempted to close that door again. Next Sunday's gospel will open with the phrase, "Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem." He's serious about his commitment and he expects the same of the disciples. This is their test of character; if they go along, they accept responsibility, like a father who's managing young children for the first time.**

**Sadly, sometimes after we accept responsibility we drop it. We realize it was more than we expected and we cannot follow through. It hurts the people who were counting on us. If it happens, we should still help in whatever way we can when we realize what we've done. Our first reading describes some people looking at someone they have pierced. We don't know more about the circumstances, but this is the line quoted in John's gospel when the centurion spears the crucified Jesus. The people look on the one they have pierced and they mourn. They realize after the fact what they have done, how they misused their responsibility. Then God fills them with compassion. Just as the gospel presents who Jesus is, the first reading presents who we are. We are people with responsibility; we make mistakes; we receive instruction from God; and sometimes we change for the better.**

**Our responsibility appears in the family, at work, and within the community. The test of our character comes when we see what we've gotten into, when we admit our shortcomings, and rely on God's spirit to guide us in what is right.**