



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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Kingdom living: being ruled by God

People may listen to the five-finger message of the Good News (see the “gospel of the hand” from the last edition of *The Witness*), but will only be convinced of it when we witness faith by the way we live. I call this witness, kingdom living; not living like kings, but being ruled by God.

And I propose we use the fingers of the other hand to remember and teach the components of kingdom living:

When we know that we’re little, lowly and weak, like our pinky, we know then that we need help, and so we pray to God each day. This is a way to acknowledge that we are ruled by God, under God. Our prayers don’t have to be long or fancy. We can pray in a church or not.

In response to God coming to us, as our ring finger reminds us, so we go to God, to worship at Sunday Mass, moved by love, not by law. We prepare to unite ourselves with God by worthy reception of Holy Communion; this is the closest, most intimate union we can have with God this side of heaven.

Our middle finger reminds us of Jesus’ cross and resurrection, by which we are saved from our sins, and so too a reminder of our need to make frequent use of the Sacrament of Confession (I suggest once a month), and to do works of penance and charity to repair the damage from the selfishness of sin.

Our index finger, used to signal an invitation – *c’mere* – to repent, believe and be baptized, can also be used, like a teacher at a blackboard, to point to the content of faith, and to the source of learning: the Bible and the Catholic Catechism. Have a Bible, read it, study it, pray with it, and put its teachings into practice.

Finally, our thumb, like an ump at a baseball game, signaling “you’re outta there!” represent being called out of old life, into a new life. And, correspondingly, like a hitchhiker sticking out his thumb and asking, “going my way?” it can represent that witness is major part of our following Jesus. And the most effective witness – more than rules, rituals, and the rod of punishment – is the joy that comes from living in the kingdom of God, and the love of neighbor it inspires in us.

And so, kingdom living in a nutshell: once a day, pray; once a week, worship at Mass and receive Holy Communion worthily; once a month, go to Confession; whenever we can, study the Bible and the Catechism; and every moment of every day, live in love, especially in service of the poor.

Now put your two hands together, matching the fingers of one hand to the other, and you have a way to summarize, memorize, and explain Good News to others. And with those same two hands joined together, pray to persevere in our faith, and to be a good witness, attracting others to Jesus because of our lived example.

Archbishop Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque