

Fifth Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day
May 10, 2020
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A few years ago, while I was preparing a homily on Jesus and the various qualities of his personality, I began to consider who influenced him to be the kind of person he was in his humanity. This led me to Mary and Joseph.

The values and virtues of parents and grandparents are often reflected in those of their children and grandchildren. As we celebrate Mother's Day today I invite you to meditate on the mother of Jesus who, it seems to me, by her example, taught him to be the kind, compassionate, and forgiving man he became.

As you do this, think also about your own mother. How did she influence you? What qualities do you experience in yourself that you learned from her (or from your grandmother)?

I trace my compassion for people who are economically poor back to my mother. As a Jesuit I have asked – and was given permission - to live and minister among African-American people in the inner city of San Francisco; in a little parish in Tijuana, Mexico; and with First Nations people in southern Alberta, Canada.

My mother had a great compassion for those who had less than we did. She was a woman of deep faith. Her faith enabled her to suffer through two years of cancer – from ages 44 to 46 – without complaining. I can only hope that I will have the kind of courage she had if severe suffering comes to me. When it came time for her to go to God, she was able to do so peacefully because she had come to trust that God in his providence would take care of my Dad and the four children still at home; I was away in college. Her “bible” during those two years was a book called, “Abandonment to Divine Providence,” written by 18th century Jesuit, Jean-Pierre de Caussade. I read the book when I was a Novice and so even four years after her death, she was still influencing me through this wonderful book.

Following this train of thought of the mother seen through the behavior of the daughter or son, let's consider the seven men chosen to be Deacons in our first reading today. It says that they were “reputable men, faith-filled with the Spirit and wisdom.” They were chosen to care for the widows many of whom it seems were economically poor. While I rejoice in their election as Deacons, I can't help but praise the mothers who raised these men - women of faith and compassion.

We don't hear much about mothers in the New Testament. I think they too need to be honored especially those who gave birth to and helped raise the Apostles.

To take this a bit further we can say that since God created mothers, there is much of motherhood within God. One author put it this way: ‘a mother's love reflects the heart of God; the loving kindness of God; and the compassion of God.’

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The Gospel contains a strong appeal for faith and for trust. Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled; have faith in God and faith in me." Words that are spoken to us as well in this time of the coronavirus.

Jesus was speaking of his death-resurrection and of his eventual return. To Thomas' question about the way to follow Jesus, Jesus replies: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Scripture scholar, Roland Faley comments: The "way" is not a spiritual road map or a book of instructions; it is Jesus himself.

Jesus' further words to Thomas and the other disciples, "If you know me then you also know my Father." And "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" opens us to the mystical reality of divine oneness. Mutual indwelling. The transition is from "I – It" (an object) to "I-Thou" (interrelationship) to "I-I" (ultimate union)

The closest we come to "I-I" I believe, is in the Eucharist. It is a union that God wants to share with us even if for a time, it is 'spiritual communion' or 'communion of the heart' that most are experiencing.

In his Letter to the Galatians, St. Paul says he is in Christ and Christ is in him. I remember reading an article about this statement of Paul's. The author presented an interesting image to describe it: a coin -- two sides, one coin.

CONCLUSION

With these thoughts in mind and those related to Mother's Day, let us pray in conclusion.

Father-Mother God,
Creator and Nourisher,
we thank You for the gift
of our mothers.
May those who have died,
be at peace;
may those who are alive,
be abundantly blessed
with Your love.
We ask you to give us the
Grace to do our best to
care for Mother Earth.
Help us to realize how easily
she can be damaged.
Give us the wisdom to know
how best to protect her.
We ask these prayers through
the intercession of Our Blessed Mother

and in the Name of Jesus her son.

AMEN.