

5-09-21. 6th Sunday of Easter. Mother's Day.

[Pr. Steve plays piano music]

[Thais' 'Mother and Child' poster.] ['How Did I Get Here?' poster]

Welcome friends to our Easter season celebration, especially celebrating today all of our moms. Happy Mother's Day!

We begin in the name of God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Bless us, O God, through these reflections today that our heart might be drawn closer to you and one another
in the life-inspiring love in, and through, and with our mothers. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Our psalm for today is **Psalms 98**.

If you wish to stand up and cheer as the psalm goes along, you are invited to do that at home, too.

*Sing to the Lord a new song,
for God's miracles renew us every day.
God's justice is beyond comprehension,
God's beauty beyond all praise.
God opens the mind of the doubter
and touches the fearful with love.
Light is sown for the righteous
and joy for the pure of heart.*

*Shout to the Lord all creatures;
burst forth in songs of thanksgiving.
Sing out with violins and harps;
praise God with a chorus of voices;
with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn
make joyful music to the Lord.
Let the heavens and the earth rejoice,
let the waves of the ocean roar,
let the rivers clap their hands,
and the mountains rumble with joy,
let the meadows sing together,*

*let the trees of the forest exult
in acknowledgement of God,
whose justice is always present,
whose truth hides beneath the surface,
shining from the depths of the world,
whose love pulses in the atoms
and extends to the outermost stars of the universe!*

*Praise to the God who is, Praise to the God who was,
Praise to the God who is to come for ages unending.*

Amen!

Our Gospel text for today is from **John, chapter 15**. John writes in a mnemonic spirit, a kind of simplicity, a haunting rhythm that just wants to sink into our souls. It has been said that when every one of us relaxes while rocking in a rocking chair, in that ultimate state of relaxation, each of us moves to the pace of our mother's heartbeat. Hear John's text seated in your rocking chair, underneath your mother's heart.

*'I have loved you, just as God has loved me', says Jesus.
'Remain in my love. If you keep my word, you will remain in my love
just as I have kept the Mother's love and remain in her love. I have told you this
so that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my word:
love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down
their life for their friends. You are my beloved friends. I shall no longer call you
servants,
because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I
have
made known to you everything I have learned from the Mother. You did not choose me,
I chose you; and have called you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the
Mother
will give you anything you ask in her name. My word to you is to love one another.'*

The Word of God. Praise to you, O Christ.

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In the name of God, our Mother, the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Many, many times I have already shared with you that we first learn who we are by gazing into our mother's eyes.

The truth holds us, the truth embraces us, and what we see reflected in her eyes tells us who we are. First, by feeling that truth--long before we ever know that truth we feel that truth--and when loved into being, we come to trust that truth of a mother's love. God is a motherly Father [and a fatherly Mother]??.

Our Gospel today is so personal, so intimate, so encouraging. 'I have loved you as God loves me', says Jesus, who then asks us again, and again, and again 'to remain in my love'. Why? 'So that', Jesus says, 'my joy may be in you, and your joy will become complete.'

Here's a lovely poem about joy from our friend, Rumi.

*No one knows what makes the soul wake up
so happy one day! Maybe it's a dawn breeze
that has blown away the veil from the face of God.*

*A thousand new moons appear.
Roses open laughing.
Hearts become like rubies
beaming in the sunset!*

The body seems to turn to spirit.

*Why is it now so easy to surrender
even for those who have already surrendered?*

*There's no answer to any of this.
No one knows the source of joy.*

*A poet breathing through a reed flute,
makes the tip of every hair on her head
stand up with joy.*

*There's no answer,
no answer to the source of joy!*

Our loving is the way God's secrets get told. Our loving is the way God's secrets get told.

Love is an open secret. It is the most obvious thing in the world--we all want it--and simultaneously it is the most hidden. We long for love, and we are terrified to love. Love simply wants to open us like the roses, laughing for no reason at all. Well, if our purpose here is to make God--who is love--real, how do we do that?

This is why God made mothers. They are here to balance love, which is enthusiasm, with discipline, practical helpfulness. You see, we are usually tempted to think of mystics as ecstatic beings lost in space, wandering off the planet, deep in some mystical trance. *Au contraire*, as one of my theological professors used to say, that's not true. Think of mystics as your mother--very focused in the present moment, and fiercely practical, even about mystical things. I know, I know, your mother like mine may have been quite demanding, and Lord knows, she made mistakes. But all that training was so that you and I could become compassionate, wise, trustworthy human beings. Don't all of our mothers teach us, 'Don't waste your time judging other human beings! It's impossible to know their ideas or their motivations. Instead, dear beloved little one, become the person you want others to be.'

Do you hear the Mother God speaking to your inmost heart today? 'I made you. I can only love. You are mine, I chose you. Remain in my love that your joy, and our joy, might become complete.' Our loving is the way God's secrets get told. Amen.

Today we remember within our prayers--
all of the children who are struggling for life on this planet,
those who are ill, those who are abandoned, those who have

been separated from their parents,
refugee and immigrant children searching for a new life;
we remember all the prayers of mothers and fathers whose hearts have been broken
by their
children, and ask that the healing and restoration they long for may come to fruition
soon.

We pray for Brian and Bob, Heather, Kyle, Marlene, George, Karen, Ed, Dana, Marshall.
Gratitude for Kait and her recovery, along with Alicia.
We pray for Lenny and Grant, for Joanne and Jose.

God in your mercy, hear our prayers.

And may the endless bounty of your creation, which barely begins to mirror the
fullness
of your love for all that is, O God, take root deep within us and burst us forth in this
spring season, with that blossoming of compassion and wisdom and grace which our
earth
and we need so desperately. Dissolve all that doesn't matter. Heal the brokenness of
our own
hearts that we may continue to be agents of healing and your compassionate love,
revealing your secrets
in our time and place.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Glory be to God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit, and upon us weak and wounded
people,
upon us amazing and beautiful creatures, may mercy and compassion be shed in both
worlds,
now and forever. Amen.

[Gary Sponholtz and fellow musicians play 'Joyful, joyful, we adore thee' in Madison,
Wisconsin]

