

5th Sunday of Easter: Yr. A – 2020

[Acts 6:1-7; 1 Pt 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12]

Sadly, many of us will celebrate this Mother's Day from afar. Our heart will long to be with our mother and a mother's heart will long to have her children home. Home is where our affection for mom was nurtured as she watched over and cared for the family. Throughout our faith history, the family has been referred to as the "domestic church." Our Gospel speaks to joining a Heavenly family in the Father's house. But the Father's house only became available to us because a very special mother named Mary made a home first in her womb for God. Pope Benedict said Mary is the "*Church at the Source*." Therefore, it is fitting that we celebrate our earthy mothers and our Heavenly mother in the same month.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross said, "*The woman's soul is fashioned as a shelter, in which other souls may unfold.*" In other words, our mothers provide a space, first within their womb and then within the home for us to mature physically and spiritually. St. Paul VI wrote, "*Every mother is like Moses. She does not enter the promised land. She prepares a world she will not see.*" Our mother may not see with her earthly eyes how we finish this path in life, but be assured she is the one who set us on it and will continue to guide us.

Maybe we have experienced the loss of a mother, a child, or never felt the embrace of our mother. Then we need to turn to the empty tomb on Easter morning. After Mary Magdalene realized that it was the Risen Jesus standing before her, she tried to hug him. Jesus responded with these startling words: "*Stop holding on to me ...*" Jesus was not rejecting the embrace of one of his beloved daughters, but rather He desired a greater intimacy. This could only be achieved after Jesus had ascended to his Father, leaving us the greater intimacy of the Holy Spirit which gives birth to a Church that continues His Presence in the Eucharist. Acknowledging this greater intimacy, St. Therese of Lisieux said that Jesus desires to take up residence in our souls more than in the golden vessels laid upon the altar.

By partaking of the Eucharist we receive Jesus and all that have died in union with him. The Communion of Saints that our deceased loved ones belong to is a reality within the greater Body of Christ. Thus the Eucharist is not only communion with God Himself, but also with all who sleep in Christ. This is why Jesus paints a familiar image to us of what Heaven looks like – a home, a family, and a celebration of those we love; a reality our mothers first prepared us for.

The Eucharist, Mary, and Jesus are closer than we might have originally thought. Science shows that after conception, cells from both mother and baby pass back and forth across the placenta. After the baby is born, some cells remain functional for the rest of the mother's life and likewise the child will have cells from his or her mother for life. Thus a mother and child remain quite close even when they are far away. Mary was then forever the tabernacle carrying Jesus within her. When considering the Eucharist, Jesus' body and his blood are Mary's as well. For St. John Vianney said, "*The Father takes pleasure in looking upon the heart of the most holy Virgin Mary, as the masterpiece of his hands ... The Son takes pleasure in it as the heart of His mother, the source from which He drew the blood that ... ransomed us.*"

Whether it be the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary nudging her Son into action at the Wedding in Cana, to the holy women at the foot of the Cross, or the women whom Jesus first appeared to on Easter morning, there is a special maternal care that women and especially mothers convey to the rest of us. St. John Paul II commented, "*Women have a very particular approach to handing on the faith and thus Jesus himself summoned them to evangelize.*"

There is no greater legacy for a mother to leave, then to pass on the faith to her children. As St. Augustine's mother, St. Monica, was dying, she said, "*I do not know ... why I am still here, all my hopes in this world [are] now fulfilled. All I wished for was that I might see you a Catholic and a child of Heaven.*" This Mother's Day we should thank our earthy mother and our Heavenly Mother, for both have prepared us for a place in the Father's house in Heaven.