

REMEMBERING OUR MOTHERS

**Honor your father and your mother,
as the LORD, your God, has commanded you,
that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land
which the LORD, your God, is giving you.**

Deuteronomy 5:16



As we pause and remember that the God Who created us is closer to us than our very breathe, we praise our Creator for the awesome and wonderful gift of life. In the name of the Almighty Who brought us into being, the Son Jesus Who Redeemed us from sin, and the Holy Spirit, our Life and Grace-Giver Who calls us to holiness and wholeness. All glory and praise to You now and forever. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

**Blessed are you among all women,
and blest is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

**Gentle woman, quiet light, morning star, so strong and bright,
Gentle Mother, peaceful dove, teach us wisdom, teach us love.**

**You were chosen by the Father;
You were chosen for the Son.
You were chosen from all women and for woman, shining one.**

**Blessed are you among women,
Blest in turn all women, too.
Blessed they with peaceful spirits.
Blessed they with gentle hearts.**

Hail Mary, Carey Landry, 1975, North American Liturgy Resources

We offer our prayer today for the gift of our mother and all mothers, grand-mothers, God-mothers, stepmothers, foster mothers, and others who have taken the place of a mother in our lives. May God bless and reward them for their labors and sacrifices on our behalf.

We remember, too, our heavenly mother, Mary, whom Christ gave to us as our very own mother.

When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there, whom He loved,
He said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.”
Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.”
And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

-John 19: 26-27

1 Kings 3: 16-28

Two women came to the king and stood before him.

One woman said: “By your leave, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth in the house while she was present.

On the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were alone in the house; there was no one there but us two.

This woman’s son died during the night; she smothered him by lying on him.

Later that night she got up and took my son from my side, as I, your handmaid, was sleeping. Then she laid him in her bosom, after she had laid her dead child in my bosom.

I rose in the morning to nurse my child, and I found him dead. But when I examined him in the morning light, I saw it was not the son whom I had borne.”

The other woman answered, “It is not so! The living one is my son, the dead one is yours.” But the first kept saying, “No, the dead one is your child, the living one is mine!” Thus they argued before the king.

Then the king said: “One woman claims, ‘This, the living one, is my child, and the dead one is yours.’ The other answers, ‘No! The dead one is your child; the living one is mine.’”

The king continued, “Get me a sword.” When they brought the sword before him, he said, “Cut the living child in two, and give half to one woman and half to the other.”

The woman whose son it was, in the anguish she felt for it, said to the king, “Please, my lord, give her the living child—please do not kill it!” The other, however, said, “It shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide it!”

The king then answered, “Give the first one the living child! By no means kill it, for she is the mother.”

Reflection

-Rev. Robert Bowman

What does motherhood mean? First, it means sharing in the creative power of God. Conceiving, carrying, and giving birth to a human being is as close as any person can come to the act of creation. That is the beginning of motherhood. But it is far from the end. Motherhood is also nurturing, sacrificing, loving, and ultimately letting go. (The reading, about the two women before Solomon, each claiming to be a baby’s mother, is an extreme example of how sometimes loving can mean letting go. As the real mother found out, sometimes being willing

to let go is the only way to hold onto your child.) In these ways, too, mothers reflect the nature, the actions, and the being of God. We are grateful to our mothers. And we are grateful to God for giving us our mothers, and for being the source and font of their motherhood.

The second point to be celebrated today is the special motherhood of Mary. As she says in the Magnificat, "All generations will call me blessed." Why do we call her blessed? Because she was honored with the special privilege of being the mother of Jesus, the Word made flesh, God incarnate. She was given a great gift. But is this why we honor her, for being extremely lucky? Do we honor someone for winning the lottery? Well, maybe we do, but we shouldn't. Do we honor Mary for her virginity? We shouldn't. It was not at all uncommon for girls her age to be virgins. No, what makes Mary worthy of honor is her motherhood — and not just the biological part. God could have used the womb of any one of thousands of Jewish girls of that day. But motherhood is more than that. God chose her because he knew she would also do the nurturing, the sacrificing, the loving, and the letting go. And in Mary's case, this wasn't easy, especially the letting go. We also honor Mary because she knew all this would be difficult when she agreed to it. She knew the suspicion and shame her pregnancy would bring upon her. Being an unwed mother wasn't any easier then than it is now. Yet she said yes to God, and became the first Christian. But we honor her more for the part of her motherhood that only began in that Bethlehem cave.

The third point is the motherhood of God. We have talked about how mothers, including Mary, share in the creative actions of God. We have also noted that the nurturing, sacrificing, loving acts of mothers reflect the nature of God. It follows, therefore, that God's nature includes all the maternal instincts and qualities.

It is also indisputable that God's creative power is complete and undivided. God even gave some animals (like amoeba) the power to reproduce themselves. But in others, like man, God divided his creative power between male and female, so that they would have to come together to reproduce. Obviously, God is the source and model of both male and female.

Mothers: be assured, you are made every bit in God's image, and perhaps even more so than us who mirror only the fatherhood of God. God is love, the Gospel says, and you mothers are the highest created implementation of that love. You reflect the motherhood of God.

Finally, it is fitting that on Mothers' Day we reflect on the social application of motherhood — peace. Mothers' Day, contrary to popular wisdom, was not invented by the Florists' Association; nor by the telephone company. Mothers' Day was invented by a mother protesting the killing of World War I. She got other mothers to protest, too, and pretty soon Congress got in the act. Finally.

President Woodrow Wilson pronounced the second Sunday in May as Mothers' Day, a day dedicated not to honoring mothers, but to honoring their wishes — that the killing be stopped.

This aspect of Mothers' Day is too often ignored, even by the church. It should not be. It is central to the whole idea of motherhood, including the motherhood of God. You mothers know the pain of seeing your children fighting and hurting each other. Can you imagine the pain of seeing one of your children kill another? Can you imagine seeing your children divide into opposing armies and slaughter each other? That's what war is to God.

It is not enough to set aside a day to honor mothers. We must devote ourselves to ridding our social institutions of the violence and killing which have caused so many mothers so much pain and grief. We must try to imbue our institutions, including the church, with the ideals and attitudes of motherhood. We must strive for a society which reflects the nurturing, the sacrificing, and the loving of mothers. For then they will also reflect the nurturing, the sacrificing, and the loving of God, the mother of us all.

Since time began, there have been maybe six billion mothers. This was the story of just one of them. In this case, as with Mary the mother of Jesus, the hardest part was probably the letting go. Other times, it's something else. Every story of motherhood is different. Each one is valuable. I'm sure each of you has your own. Today is a day for remembering those stories.

Mothers, we honor you this day and every day. We thank you, and we thank God for giving you to us and for endowing you with the spirit of giving, caring, nurturing, loving, and (when necessary) letting go.



Most Gracious Heavenly Father,

We thank You for our mothers to whom You have entrusted the care of every precious human life from its very beginning in the womb.

You have given to woman the capacity of participating with You in the creation of new life. Grant that every woman may come to understand the full meaning of that blessing, which gives her an unlimited capacity for selfless love for every child she may be privileged to bear, and for all Your children.

Watch over every mother who is with child, strengthen her faith in Your Fatherly care and love for her and for her unborn baby. Give her courage in times of fear or pain, understanding in times of uncertainty and doubt, and hope in times of trouble. Grant her joy in the birth of her child.

To mothers You have given the great privilege and responsibility of being a child's first teacher and spiritual guide. Grant that all mothers may worthily foster the faith of their children, following the example of Mary, Elizabeth, and other holy women who follow Christ. Help mothers to grow daily in knowledge and understanding of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and grant them the wisdom to impart this knowledge faithfully to their children, and to all who depend upon them.

Assist all "spiritual mothers", those who, though they may have no children of their own, nevertheless selflessly care for the children of others — of every age and state in life. Grant that they may know the joy of fulfilling this motherly calling of women, whether in teaching, nursing, religious life, or in other work which recognizes and fosters the true dignity of every human being created in Your image and likeness.

We beseech You to send Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to all mothers who sorrow for children that have died, are ill or estranged from their families, or who are in trouble or danger of any kind. Help grieving mothers to rely on Your tender mercy and Fatherly love for all your children.

We ask Your blessing on all those to whom You have entrusted motherhood. May Your Holy Spirit constantly inspire and strengthen them. May they ever follow the example of Mary, mother of Our Lord, and imitate her fidelity, her humility, and her self-giving love. May all mothers receive Your Grace abundantly in this earthly life, and may they look forward to eternal joy in Your presence in the life to come.

We ask this through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Who was born and raised by Mary and Joseph.



MAGNIFICAT

**My soul magnifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God Who loves me.
For this God Who is, has done great things for me.
My heart and my body give breath to the world.
My spirit, courageous, gives meaning to hope.
The God Who is tender lives deep in my heart,
Holds close the children, my gift to creation;
Fills friends who hunger with goodness and peace.
The God Who is mercy forgives when I fall,
Welcomes my efforts,
Heals deepest pain.
The God Who is promise gives life to my word;
Gives glory to my life, the life of the world.
My name is called blessed on the lips of all ages.
Holy is God's gift.
Holy is God's name.**

-Carmelites of Indianapolis

**We cannot own the sunlit sky, the moon, the wild-flowers growing,
For we are part of all that is within life's river flowing.
With open hands receive and share the gifts of God's creation,
That all may have abundant life in every earthly nation.**

**When bodies shiver in the night and weary wait for morning,
When children have no bread but tears, and war horns sound their warning.
God calls humanity to awake, to join in common labor,
That all may have abundant life, oneness with their neighbor.**

**God calls humanity to join as partners
in creating a future free from want o fear.
Life's goodness celebrating, that new world beckons from afar,
Invites our shared endeavor that all might have abundant life and peace endure
forever.**

-Abundant Life, Ruth Duck, 1992, GIA Publications



Mary, Mother of Jesus and our mother, watch over us and lead us to your Son.

**Saint John Baptist de La Salle
And all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
Help us to appreciate the gift and sacrifice of motherhood.**

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!