

Who, from our mothers' arms, has blessed us on our way,
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

Don't mothers give those countless gifts of love from day to day, and even hour by hour, minute by minute? Mothers seem to be an endless supply of love and compassion, blessed by God to support her family in time of need.

What is a Christian mother's source of love? **"We love because God first loved us,"** the evangelist John writes in his love-letter to the Church. Many of you are able express your love to your mother in cards and letters, not only on this Mothers' Day but every day and as often as you can. Others like me can only remember our mothers who have been called from this valley of sorrow to their rest in God the Father's house. We may continue to mourn their passing, longing to tell them or ask them one more thing. Our heavenly Father knows the secrets in our hearts, and surrounds us with His abiding Word to comfort and to bless, just as a godly mother would do for her children.

Mothers who relied upon and trusted God were not without the counsel and might of His gracious words. We may remember growing up and hearing what our parents, and today as we remember our mothers, had told us concerning the things Jesus had taught us.

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."

On the night Jesus would be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, He would prepare His disciples by calming their troubled hearts. Spoken in the upper room, these words have become a source of great comfort to many who fear the future. Jesus will prepare a place for us that will be secure. He will personally come to escort us to this new home, assuring us that we will know the way where He will go. Like the Good Shepherd, He will lead us on the path of righteousness, and we will follow Him as He leads us to our eternal home where we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

On that night when Jesus was betrayed, He knew of the preparations He would have to make on our behalf, enduring the suffering under Pontius Pilate, being crucified, wrestle with death, and be laid in the grave. His preparations would come to completion as He was raised from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. He now prepares each of us to receive our eternal dwelling.

Mothers are busy preparing things in the house for their families. They maintain the home as well. We hear that described in a poem by Joe Griffenberg, where he writes:

Kneading and baking, hoeing and raking,
A mother's work is never done.
Cutting off crust and wiping up dust,
A mother's work is never done.
Raising children, one by one,
Growing a garden for food and for fun,
Canning the yams, the beans, and the jams,
Shopping with thrift for the perfect gift,
Traveling for miles to bring family smiles,
Taking care of the ill and paying the bill,
A mother's work is never done.
Being a mother is what you do best,
Forgiving mistakes, obliging the rest,
Loving us always in good times and bad,
Making us smile whenever we're sad,

Sharing your wisdom and guiding our way,
Keeping us focused, we won't go astray.
You taught us to love, laugh, and have fun.
We thank you dear mother.
Your work's never done.

Jesus' work with the disciples wasn't done, either.

**Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going.
How can we know the way?"**

**Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one
comes to the Father except through Me."**

Thomas acts as the spokesman for the disciples and asks for their sake of finding some answer to their anxiety. Jesus knew that He would soon go the way of the cross at Calvary and be put to death. Jesus knew this was the only way that eternal life could come to the people of the world. The disciples had heard of His passion prediction several times before. Jesus would gently and urgently teach them that He is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life. The only way to the Father was through believing in Him, and believing that everything would work out according to God's will.

Christian mothers try to assure their families to trust God as well. Mothers have to have courage, especially in these trying times when so many things can attack the values of the family, including faith. Satan seeks to steal and kill and destroy the good things of God, including the family as we saw in the first family when Adam and Eve's first children, Cain and Abel, would offer their sacrifices, but Cain would be led to envy and hatred and kill his brother Abel. The first mother of the earth had to experience the loss of her child in the first murder of the world. God would stand by her to bless her and give her more children, fulfilling His promise of blessing them to be fruitful and fill the earth with children.

The role of any Christian mother who defends the truth in this world today is not without its challenges. Consider Stephen, the first Christian

martyr of the Church. He made a defense of the faith by retelling the true story of the Children of Israel and their idolatrous past. Unlike the crowd who heard Peter's Pentecost Day sermon and were cut to the heart and repented, this crowd would be driven to anger and rage, skip the formalities of Temple law directing proper trial for blasphemy, and rush Stephen away, outside the city walls, and stone him to death.

But Stephen would remain faithful to God, commending his life to God's care and forgiving those who trespassed against him. Don't Christian mothers do the same? Don't they trust God and commend their lives, their families, and their loved ones into God's almighty care, and pray to forgive the sins and hurts that even their own families do against them?

And consider also the sacrifices that mothers make for their families. Making sacrifices was part of the role of the priests in the Old Testament. Mothers are also set apart as special people in the family—they are holy in that respect. The Apostle Peter would write to those who were the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**

Would Peter also write to the believers of the dispersion in La Porte, Indiana as well? Would he write to the believers at St. John's and tell them that each of you here today also share in the priestly work of making sacrifices and offering prayers and intercession for all people? That we here today have been called from the darkness of sin and death and through baptismal grace been brought into the marvelous light of His love and mercy? That we are now His beloved people, His treasured possession? That we are called to proclaim His love to others, to be a missional Church in defending the faith like Stephen, to show Jesus as the only Way, Truth, and Life?

If you had the best mother in the world, would you tell someone else about her? That would be easy to do, wouldn't it? If you had the best Savior in the world, would you tell someone else about Him? Stephen certainly did. So did Paul, so did Peter, the Apostles, and the Prophets before them. **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

Stephen did. So did Peter as the tradition of the Church tells his fate as he, too, was martyred. They knew the countless gifts of love God has for all people and how He would so love the world and send His only Son Jesus, so that all who believe in Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, should not perish, but have eternal life, and to have that life abundantly.

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” As a nursing mother would give milk to her newborn, so we draw on the nourishment of God's Word, tasting the goodness and mercy that our Lord would desire for us to receive. He would prepare a home for us in His heavenly mansion. As we think of the countless homeless and refugees who are searching for a home, we who have homes can pray and work to provide shelter and homes to those who are in need. When we are unsure of the way, as Thomas was, we can trust Jesus to show us the way to loving our neighbor in need.

God's dwelling in heaven has unlimited occupancy. There's room for everyone! And Jesus is preparing that place for us. He's not going to abandon us between the crucifixion and everlasting life. Until eternal life comes and we are ushered into our eternal home in heaven, do not hesitate to admit our ignorance to Jesus as Thomas and Philip did. Be

prepared to be told and retold what Jesus says in His Word and Sacrament. You remember your mother telling you, “If I told you once, I told you a hundred times...” Jesus would gently and patiently instruct you again and again of His love and mercy, calming the storms in your life, just as a mother would do in calming her child.

We come to worship to hear Jesus assure us again and again of His Truth. We may become upset with the disappointments in life, sorrow and tears often cloud our spiritual wisdom, and we need deliverance from those things that trouble us. May we come again to hear the Words of Jesus, to speak the liturgy, to pray the prayers, to sing the hymns of faith, to receive the nourishment of the pure Sacrament of the Altar, and be comforted with the countless gifts of love and salvation God would design for us to receive daily and richly through His Spirit. Amen.

The peace of Christ, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts, so that your hearts may not be troubled. Amen.