

## Sermon 14 May 2023 Mothers Day

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 John 17:9-17

Our focus today is very much on mothers. Our gospel reading lends itself to a reflection on the role of mothers. In this passage we see Jesus praying for his disciples. One of the things that comes through is the love and care Jesus has for his disciples. It is a love and care that invites comparisons with the love and care a mother has for her children. It is also interesting to note that this theme of love underpins all of John's writings.

A couple of interesting points to note in this prayer Jesus makes on behalf of his disciples. Firstly, he prays for unity of his disciples. *'Protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.'* There is undoubtedly a message there for us all. A church that is not united cannot worship together effectively, nor can it spread the gospel. Who is going to be attracted to a congregation, a church where there is conflict of personalities or vision? Where criticism of one another is apparent? For a church to be effective a sense of harmony and care must prevail.

In the same way, a family that is divided and fractured is unable to provide support and succour to its members. This, after all, is probably the prime function of a family. And who do we usually look to in order to provide the glue that holds a family together? Invariably mum. Perhaps not in every case, but usually.

Back to Jesus' prayer. The second point I want to draw our attention to is that Jesus did not pray that his disciples should be removed from the rough and tumble of the world, but rather that they should have some protection. *'I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.'* In other words, they are called upon to get involved, to challenge both themselves and the people. Serving Christ does not mean that we will be spared the rigours of life, but rather that we will be equipped to deal with those rigours.

It is, after all, the rough and tumble of life that both our faith and we ourselves grow. James puts it so well when he said, *'Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for everything.'* James 1:2-4. It is a well-known fact of life that we are shaped and moulded by the challenges that we have to deal with as we journey through life.

I want to draw our attention to verse 15, *'I ask you to protect them from the evil one.'* We all need protection. It doesn't mean that we need to be shielded from trials and tribulations, on the contrary, but rather we feel a sense of security, of care, of love as we combat the slings and arrows, the rough and tumble of life. God certainly provides us with that sense of security, a sense that with him on our side we are equipped to deal with whatever comes our way. *'Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.'* 1 Peter 5:7.

Once again, we see a comparison with the role mothers play. Their unique relationship with their children means that they are invariably the ones who project a sense of security and care for their young. I do notice that even though I have a very good relationship with my children, that if there are tears it will more than likely be their mother whom they run to for comfort. That is the special nature of mums. It is said that *'a father becomes concerned when his child breaks a bone, a mother when her child skins a knee,'* A bit tough on fathers, but you get the point.

We do learn a lot from mums. There is no doubt that the concept of unconditional love sits fairly and squarely with the love of a mother for her children. Those wonderful and well-known words from our first reading, 1 Corinthians 13, are so very applicable. *'Love is kind; it is not irritable or resentful. It bears all things, endures all things.'*

We also hear in that reading that *'love is patient.'* How true is that, as mess after mess after mess is cleaned up. Though mums are human. A young boy was telling his vicar that his mother prayed for him every night. 'That's great,' said the vicar, 'How does she pray for you?' The boy replied, 'When my mum tucks me up in bed, she always says, "Thank God he's in bed."'

I want to briefly touch on the issue of values. Our values determine the way we behave, our attitude, they influence our decision-making. These values are discerned and absorbed in the family, and to a large extent from our mothers. Edward de Bono, in his book, 'Handbook for the Positive Revolution,' writes, *'In the end, it is the women who set the values in society. Mothers bringing up children set the values by their example and by their instruction.'*

Children learn to admire those things which their mothers lead them to admire, and to reject those things which their mothers reject. Women set the values for their husbands through respecting certain courses of action and giving silent disapproval to other courses of action. Well, silent for the most part, perhaps! In the end, men seek the approval of their women. So ladies, all power to you!

The role the family plays in our development is of crucial consequence. What we learn in the bosom of our family, we then extend beyond the confines of our family, and establish similar relationships. Jesus referred to this when he said in Matthew 12:48, *'Who are my brothers and sisters? Here are my brothers and sisters,'* as he indicated the people around him. And who is at the heart of these families? Mothers!

I want to finish by sharing with you this mother's resolution: 'I will always be a good, fair and loving parent to my children. I will provide them with enriching experiences and opportunities. I will give them a solid foundation on which to build a useful life. After all, they may eventually be responsible for choosing the nursing home for me to live out my final days.'

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