



THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
MOTHER'S DAY
May 10, 2020
North Congregational Church
New Hartford, Connecticut

WORSHIP ON THE NINTH SUNDAY
THAT WE ARE NOT GATHERING IN OUR SANCTUARY
BECAUSE WE WISH TO HONOR THE GOVERNOR'S REQUEST FOR
PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD
OF THE CORONAVIRUS THAT IS TRAVELING AROUND THE GLOBE

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FOR YOUR MEDITATION

The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom. -Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887),
Congregational minister, abolitionist and pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn,
New York (and born in Litchfield, Connecticut, son of The Rev. Lyman Beecher)

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THE PEACE OF CHRIST It is normally our custom when we gather to extend the Peace of Christ to one another. Even though we are physically apart at this time, may you know that peace.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

On this Mother's Day, Loving God, we give thanks for and pay homage to the mothers in our lives and also to all the women who have nurtured and challenged us. On this day we are mindful especially of mothers everywhere, especially those who struggle to provide their children with life's basic necessities. Give all mothers kind hearts, patience and strength and grant them the ability to inspire in their children hope, enthusiasm and compassion. Enable us, in turn, to extend to those mothers and all important women in our lives our gratitude, affirmation and respect. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

The Care the Eagle Gives Her Young

Tune: CRIMOND

<https://youtu.be/JPEK7FdzpqI>

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Proverbs 6: 20-23a

20 My child, keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. 21 Bind them upon your heart always; tie them around your neck.

22 When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.

23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light...

2 Timothy 1: 1-7

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life

that is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from

God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 I am grateful to God—whom I worship with

a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and

your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. 6 For this reason I remind you to

rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; 7 for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and

self-discipline.

Mark 3: 31-35

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

MEDITATION

Church Moms

The Rev. Marcia Lynn

Cox

Mothers Day is not a Sunday on the liturgical calendar, and at this time of the year ministers debate about whether to preach from the lectionary or to preach a Mother's Day sermon. Every year I discover that some of my colleagues do not mark this day in their churches and I imagine that their congregations think them a bit heartless.

Although Mother's Day is a secular holiday, I believe that it has an important place in the life of the church, because all of the mothers worshipping here--and all of the Christian mothers who raised us up in the faith---you and they--are special to the church. You and they are Church Mothers- church moms- and need to be honored because Christian mothers have had and continue to have an enormous influence in the world. Our church mother's teach us about faith, by their example, guidance and prayers. Henry Ward Beecher, the famous Congregational preacher of the 19th century, once observed, "The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom." Similarly President Abraham Lincoln wrote this about the influence of his mother and her faith on him, "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

One Mother's Day card I saw this month spoke also to the importance of a mother's prayers. On the front of the card is a young man who is paying tribute to his mother by saying, "Mom, I remember that little prayer you used to say for me everyday..."

When you open the card up it reads, "God help you if you ever do that again !"

In our epistle lesson this morning from the book of 2 Timothy, St. Paul is writing to Timothy, who he refers to as his beloved child. If you remember, Timothy was a young traveling companion of Paul and a faithful and dedicated evangelist. Paul writes this, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice (yu-nih'-see)." As we know, women were extremely influential in the early church, and Lois and Eunice were two of many.

I would venture to say that, like Timothy, the faith of many of us was formed because of the teaching and example of our mothers and grandmothers. I know that is certainly true

for me. My mother's steadfast faith, and understanding of service to the church and the importance of weekly worship shaped my early life and continues to inspire me still. As St. Paul writes to Timothy, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you." The faith that mothers communicate can live in children for a lifetime.

Sometimes, no matter how strong a mother's faith is, it can be rejected by children. In every church I've served, mothers have spoken to me about the fact that one or more of their children that were raised in church no longer consider worship to be a priority in their lives. Some mothers try to rationalize or dismiss this, but I know it pains them greatly. I feel their sadness and can only hope and pray that their children will return to church. Mothers: take heart. Your teaching and example has greatly influenced the lives of your children. And keep praying for them: we never know when a child will awaken to the faith in which they have been raised and experience the need to "come home" to church.

Mother's Day can be a difficult Sunday for other reasons. Some of us are concerned about ill or aging mothers, or are mourning the passing on of mothers---for some of you the deaths of your mothers has been recent. Other mothers are challenged by a physical illness of a child, or are mourning a child's premature death. Some of us find this to be a sad day because we have never had children. Others of us have had strained relationships with our mothers or have never known our biological mothers. There are many reasons why Mothers Day is not as joyful as the Hallmark cards would lead us to believe.

But despite the sadness some of us might be feeling on this day, Jesus offers us hope. In our gospel reading this morning from the book of Mark, Jesus is teaching to, the Bible says, "a crowd" in his home--the home of his family. His biological family who, it seems, were neither at home nor in the crowd, comes and stands outside and calls to him. The crowd tells Jesus, "Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you." Scripture tells us that Jesus replies, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those around him says, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Now at first reading, we may assume that this statement might hurt his immediate family. But his observation seeks not to exclude them or disrespect them. But rather, in this statement, he creates a larger, loving family.

The church is indeed a family for all of us: Whether we are only children or have a number of siblings; whether our parents are alive or have passed on; whether we have a happy family life or whether we are estranged from a member of our family of origin.

Through our relationship with Jesus Christ, we may all find comfort and support, a place of belonging and a purpose. Jesus says that all we need is to do is to join with others who are seeking to do God's will and presto, we have a family. Each and everyone of us can have-- or can be-- church moms. For those of us without mothers or grandmothers: there is a wide choice of mothers and grandmothers in our congregation. For those of us without children: there are children in church needing our love and nurture and teaching in the faith.

And there are children out in the world needing us as well. Our faith can inspire us to do wonderful things for people. Perhaps some of you watched the Hallmark Hall of Fame program several years ago. It dramatized the heroism of Irena Sendler, a young unmarried woman who helped save the lives of 2,500 Jewish babies and young children in the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II.

She was a Roman Catholic social worker, but obtained false identification as a nurse and so was able to enter and exit the walled-off ghetto with relative ease. With the help of many other people, she found non-Jewish families and individuals who would care for these children as their own.

In 1943, the Gestapo arrested Sendler. She spent three months in captivity, undergoing interrogation and torture. She betrayed no one and so was sentenced to death. Fortunately she was freed by a guard who was bribed by the Polish resistance movement.

Irena Sendler was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, and died at age 98 in May 2008. While alive, she was never comfortable being singled out for special recognition. She always reminded people that smuggling and then protecting all those children represented a collective effort on the part of many brave souls, including couriers, nuns, priests and Polish families, as well as the close-knit band of mostly women---single and married-- who were part of her underground smuggling network.

Most of us will never be called upon to face such danger, but shouldn't this kind of heroism inspire us to care for and teach children, no matter our age. Doing so makes us a part of a larger family---the family of God.

On this Mother's Day, may we be mindful of all of the women who have influenced our lives, but particularly those women of faith, those church mothers from generations past, who, by their teaching and example, gave us the faith that lives on in us. Let us also hold up and give thanks for the church moms in our midst now who continue to shape our faith and the faith of our children today. And may we all acquire, no matter what our age,

marital status, or even gender, the loving hearts of mothers.

In the Name of our Mother-Father God, our brother and teacher, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, who moves us to acts of love and kindness each moment of our lives. Amen.

MUSICAL REFLECTION

You Raise Me Up

Music, Told Lovland; Lyrics Brendan Gra-

ham

<https://youtu.be/sNJ-XJZIVWE>

PRAYER

This day we gather, O God, thankful for your love and care for us, which inspires us to love and care for one another.

We praise you, O God, for your gift of motherly love, both gentle and fierce, both strong and humble, embracing and sending forth. Where we have been so blessed, we give our grateful praise, for you have provided loving hands that have worked so hard in raising us, cared enough to correct us, blessed us in ways we have yet even now to acknowledge.

We ask that you enable us to embody all the very best qualities we associate with mother love: an open heart, a friendly smile, a desire to listen and to encourage.

We thank you for those women who have given us life, those who have loved us, those who have blessed us, and those who have taught us, our mothers. May your blessing pour out upon the woman who gave us birth, and those beautiful, strong women of faith who have been mothers to us along our journeys.

We bless our mothers this day, no matter what they have done or left undone. We call forth your compassion upon every mother who has unknowingly caused pain and suffering. And so we offer forgiveness to them, so imperfect, also wounded by this world. Forgive us, too, if we have been ungrateful, or for any hurts we have caused our mothers. Give us the courage to express our thanks anew or to make amends. Bring reconciliation where there is division, separation, silence, or pain.

We lift to you the heart of every mother who has cared for a child who has experienced illness or hunger, every mother who has been a victim of abuse, every woman who stands in protest against a world in which innocent children suffer.

On this day we pray for children who do not know the love of a family, who are in need of life's basic necessities...

for those who are away from home, unable to be with their families this day ...

We are mindful, healing God, of all people who are suffering from diseases of the body, the mind and the spirit, especially.....

For those who are preparing for medical procedures....

For those who care for the sick and the dying....

For those people facing death

For all who have passed into care and for family and friends who mourn their loss.....

In our own lives, we bring to you now our joys and concerns....

All these things we offer, using the words of the prayer that Jesus taught us,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING

Although we are not gathering in the sanctuary for worship on Sundays for the time being, the church continues to have expenses. So it would be most appreciated if pledges and offerings could be mailed to the church at P.O. Box 307, New Hartford, CT 06057. Thank you for your generosity.

CLOSING HYMN

God Made from One Blood

Tune: ST. DENIO

https://youtu.be/M_ZuNM2HG14

OUR COMMON COMMISSION

Let us now forth into the world in peace.

Being of good courage.

Holding fast to that which is good.

Rendering to no one evil for evil.

Strengthening the fainthearted.

Supporting the weak.

Helping the afflicted.

Honoring all persons.

Loving and serving the Lord,

And rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go forth this day to both appreciate and embody the very best qualities exhibited by all people of good will: generosity, affection, compassion, patience, and especially those shown by church mothers: a desire to share the teaching and love of Christ. Amen.

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