

Father O'Connor's Homily for 12 May 2024
Feast of the Ascension-B
Mother's Day

Acts of the Apostles 1: 1-11
Ephesians 1: 17-23
Mark 16: 15-20

A mother named Alice had promised to make something for the parish bake sale. She put an angel food cake in the oven and then forgot about it. When she remembered, it was way too late. She knew there wasn't time to make another one.

So she searched the house for something she could use to fix up that folded-down-in remnant of a cake. And she found just what she needed in the bathroom – a roll of toilet paper! That cone in the center would work perfectly to make that angel-food-disaster look like a real cake! She pushed that roll of toilet paper down into the cake's center and covered the whole mess with lots of frosting.

As she was leaving to deliver it to the parish hall, she told her daughter, "Here's some money, and as soon as the bake sale opens, you be the first one in the door and buy back my cake!"

Well, that was the plan. Later, her daughter came back from the bake sale and said, "Sorry, Mom. Somebody else beat me to your cake." Alice was distressed.

The next day, some of the women of the parish got together for their bridge club, and Alice was a member. There was a luncheon and, at the end, the hostess brought out Alice's cake for dessert.

One of the women exclaimed, "What a lovely cake!" The hostess, who was a prominent member of the parish, replied, "Oh, thank you. I baked it myself!"

We don't know how the story ended, and it is probably best left to our imaginations. But one thing is certain. That hostess needed to re-learn a lesson her mother had taught her many years earlier: "Never tell a lie."

There was a mother who was taking a series of classes on parenting. Her little girl asked her, "Why are you doing this?" And she replied, "Because I want to learn how to be an even better mother for you."

One evening as her mother was leaving for another in the series, the little girl said to her, "Mom, this is the fourth week you're going. Aren't there any mothers there who know what they're doing?"

Being good and faithful disciples of Jesus involves our life-long learning and life-long witness. We see that message today in the Scriptures for the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord.

The Ascension is Jesus' final curtain call before He goes back to heaven to be seated at His Father's right hand. His disciples – and the word means “learners” or “students” – are hanging on to His every word. He tells them: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Samaria and Judea, and to the ends of the earth” [Acts 1: 8].

Our mothers – and our fathers – help to lay the foundation for our lifelong growth and development in being good and faithful disciples of Jesus and in being His witnesses to the world.

We honor our mothers today as well as all those women who show a motherly influence in our lives. We are grateful for our physical mothers and for our spiritual mothers.

On this Mother's Day I am not going to wax eloquently and romantically about motherhood. Nor am I going to wave the banner that says: “Eve was framed. It was all Adam's fault.”

I would like to look at motherhood today after the manner in which we pray: prayers of adoration [or praise], prayers of contrition, prayers of thanksgiving, and prayers of supplication [or petition]. An easy way to remember these four kinds of prayer is that their first letters spell the word **A-C-T-S**.

First, we ADORE God and we praise God for the gift of life. We praise God for creating us, at the moment of our conception, in His own image and likeness – through the cooperation of our parents. And we praise God for the gift of our mothers who carried us safely for nine months in the sanctuary of their wombs and who gave us birth – even at peril to their own health or their own plans. We adore God and we praise God who is the Author of Life.

Second, we also offer prayers of CONTRITION on this Mother's Day, asking the Lord's forgiveness for our blindness to the needs of mothers and their children around us. We ask God's forgiveness when mothers and children suffer violence, and we would rather not notice. We ask God's forgiveness for the deaths of children through abortion and the destruction of human embryos. We ask God's forgiveness and we offer our prayers of contrition.

Third, we THANK God for the vocation, for the calling, of motherhood. It is a calling that is second-to-none. Not second to being a priest or a president. Or being a CEO or an MVP. Motherhood is so important that when God the Father decided to send His only-begotten Son to become a man and be our Savior, He asked Mary to be the human mother of His Divine Son. Mary said “yes” and conceived Jesus in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Son of God lived in the sanctuary of her womb for nine months as His human body grew and developed. And then she gave birth to Him in Bethlehem. We thank God for Mother Mary and for our mothers and for all mothers, physical and spiritual.

And fourth, we offer prayers of SUPPLICATION or petition to God. We storm heaven with our prayers for mothers who are trying to mother while living below the poverty line. We pray for mothers who are really too young to mother, but in fact are mothers. We pray for mothers who must also act as fathers to their children. We pray for mothers who see their children trafficked, substance-addicted, and sucked into crime.

And we pray for mothers who are missing their children – and for children who are missing.

We offer God our prayers of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication/petition. And we try do our best as Jesus’ disciples to be His witnesses to the world of the value and God-given sacredness of every human life.

We ask God’s blessing today upon our mothers, adoptive mothers, step-mothers, grandmothers, Godmothers and all those women who show us a motherly love.

And, through the prayers of Mary, our Blessed Mother, may the Lord continue to bless us all, richly and warmly.

And today for God’s gift of motherhood – we are grateful...eternally grateful.

Happy Mother’s Day, everyone!