

Mother's Day

Introduction

Today, of course, is Mother's Day, when we all take a moment to express our gratitude to our mothers, both living and deceased. I am happy to wish all the Mothers who are here today a very happy day and during this Mass I ask God to bless you abundantly for the love you give to your families. And I hope you will permit me to say word about my other mother.

Mom is 95 years old, lives on her own, still drives her car, and after 68 years of marriage continues to look after my father. Trying to be a good son, I call her almost every evening. I tell her what my day has been like and she lets me know what is going on at home. Mom also continues to give me good advice. "Why don't you go to bed early tonight?" she asks, "It sounds like you've had a long day." I also give her advice: "You'd better go to the doctor to take care of that cold," I'll say, knowing that she probably won't.

Over the years, I've notice how my relationship with my parents changed. Even as a child I knew they loved me deeply but rightfully, they were also authority figures in my life. When I was a child, I obeyed Mom and Dad, but sometimes grudgingly. As I got older I became friends with my Mom and Dad. We could talk about anything, including our relationship with God, our joys and our worries, our plans and those things that didn't go so well. Mom and Dad really didn't ask me for much but when they did, I tried to go along with their wishes - not because I had to, but because I wanted to. It was and is an easy relationship but also a profound relationship of love.

"I Call You Friends"

Jesus says to us, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." We should spend a moment or two thinking about what it really means to be friends of Jesus

and what that means for the way we live our lives.

To begin with, when we hear these words in the Gospel, “I call you friends”, we might think that Jesus is only talking to the Apostles. After all, his words were addressed to them, his closest followers. They had been with him from the beginning. They heard him preach, they saw his miracles, and it was to them that he appeared after he had risen from the dead. And we might also think that the word “friendship” is just a little bit casual to describe our relationship with the Lord.

But the Church presents this Gospel to us so that we will understand that the Lord is talking not only to his apostles but to each one of us. And these words are not addressed to the human race in general but to each one of us, personally and by name. Jesus loves us very much and deeply desires our friendship. Today’s second reading makes this clear when St. John writes: “In this is love: not that we have loved God but that he has loved us and sent his Son as an expiation for our sins.” And in today’s Gospel, Jesus himself says to us, “It is not you who chose me,” Jesus says to us, “but I who chose you...”

And there is nothing casual about Jesus’ friendship with us. “No one,” he says, “has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Pope Francis sums up Jesus love for us with these words: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free you” (EG, № 164). The love Jesus has for you and me is intimate - it’s not a superficial love but loves us personally, to the very depth of our being. His love for us is infinite - deep as the ocean, high as the sky, without end. His love for us is self-giving: he laid down his very life out for us. This is the love for which we are made, This is the love which alone satisfies our deepest longings. How we should hang on to Jesus’ words, “I call you friends...”

“You Are My Friends If You Do What I Command You”

But isn't there a catch to Jesus' friendship? The full quote is: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" and what he commands us to do is to love one another the way he has loved us, and as we know, loving other people consistently and generously, is not always easy. So we might ask, is it the case that Jesus' friendship comes with a condition, he will be our friend only if we agree, however grudgingly, to do what he wants?

To answer that question, let's go back and think for a moment about our relationship with our parents. When we were growing up, it seemed as if there were a lot of rules. And while we knew our parents and teachers loved us, we also had a healthy dose of fear. We knew there were consequences, bad consequences, for not obeying. And so most of the time we did the right thing so as to keep out of trouble. But later, as our friendship with our parents deepened and as we matured, we understood that we should do the right thing not reluctantly but generously, and not out of fear but rather out of love, out of a deep and beautiful friendship.

The same is true in our Christian life. We read in today's first reading about the baptism of Cornelius and his household. When we were baptized and when we first learned about the faith, we may have thought of it as a lot of rules we had to follow. But once we realize the Lord loves us as much as he does, as generously as he does, as persistently as he does, and we open our hearts to him in friendship, then our joy is to become like the Lord in every respect - and we want to please the Lord in any way we can, just the way we want to please our closest friends in life. And that is why Jesus says to us this morning: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I told you everything I have heard from my Father." Once we have fallen in love with the Lord, the Christian life no longer seems like a lot of rules but rather as a way of life and a way of love.

Conclusion

Today we remember our Mothers so grateful because they taught us by word and example about Jesus' love for us and often gave us our first lessons in loving others generously. We ask that they may experience the Lord's love in fullest measure even as we ask for the grace to live as friends and disciples so that our lives may bear the good fruit of the Lord's love in our families, in our Church, and in our world.

May God bless us and keep us always in his love.