

The Fourth Sunday of Eater: Holy Trinity Church: May 14, 2017

Mother's Day: John 14: 1-14: *Mother Father God*

Preached

By

The Rev. John E. Higginbotham

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. You stand up to take pictures at your son's school play or at your daughter's graduation even after they've asked the audience not to. You insist your child wear a sweater when you are cold. You tell your daughter how much prettier she looks with her hair out of her eyes. When you get attitude, you hear yourself say things like, "Your face will freeze like that," and "If all your friends jumped off a bridge, would you?" There's a used Kleenex stuffed up your shirtsleeve. The first thing you ask when someone walks into your home is, "Do you want something to eat or drink?" Do you spend your vacation wondering if you left the iron turned on? Your daughter says smugly that she'll never be anything like you. Does this sound like anyone you might know? Happy Mother's Day to all our ladies this morning.

In John's Gospel chapter 14, Jesus tells us. "*I will not leave you comfortless; I*

***will come to you."* One translator has Jesus saying, "I will not leave you as orphans." Both translations of the gospel sound like Mother's Day to me.**

My dear brother and sisters in Christ, God is like a Father, but God is also very much like a Mother who comforts her children. Where is comfort to be found? That is the question for mothers, especially today and for fathers, as well. We have plenty of physical comforts but where do we find our spiritual and emotional comforts? What is Jesus promising all of us on this Mother's Day? First of all Jesus promises us, He will comfort us by his presence.

"I will not leave you comfortless," he says to his disciples, "I will come to you." You see, in the context of John14, Jesus has just predicted Peter's betrayal with his three fold denial. His disciples are all upset because Jesus tells them He is going away and He promises His disciples that God will send a comforter. God will send the Holy Spirit to be with us. We will not be left alone in this world after He physically leaves the planet. God's Holy Spirit will be with us. As a parent, is there any greater gift that we can give our children and those we love than the gift of our presence? It's hard to love somebody you never see.

Suzy Parker in an article written in USA TODAY notes that according to some studies, 75% of us live within minutes of at least one of our parents, 23% of us are within hours of a parent and 2% of us need to drive for days to see a

parent. So, why do so many of us see our mother's and father's so seldom?

Nothing says "I love you" like being there. Being there for our parents and being there for our children is so important.

Years ago there was a country-western song titled, "Roses for Mama." In the song, it is Mother's Day, and a man goes to a florist shop to buy his mother a bouquet. He knows he should visit his mother, but he has more exciting plans, so he decides to send her flowers instead. At the florist shop, the man encounters a little boy who wants to buy some roses for his mother, but he doesn't have enough money. The man gives the boy some money to buy the flowers and then buys his mother's bouquet. As the man drives away from the florist shop, he happens to pass by a cemetery. Glancing in the cemetery, he sees the little boy kneeling on a grave, a bouquet of roses in his hand. The man pulls in to the cemetery and asks the boy what he's doing. The boy explains that his mother has been dead for a year, and that he comes to the cemetery all the time to talk to her and, on this special Mother's Day, to give her flowers. The man turns around and drives back to the florist. There, he asks the florist if his mother's flowers have been delivered yet. When the florist tells him no, the man tells him to cancel the delivery, he wants to deliver them to his mother himself.

My brothers and sisters, there is nothing that says "I love you" like simply

being there. Children need parents who are there for them, if possible, both mother and father. Aging parents need children who will come to see them. Whether we know it or not, we need our parents for as long as they live. One of the great joys of my life is to have my 88 year old mother and my 90 year old father in my life and in the life of our family. They continue to be precious gifts from God in the life of our family.

In John 14, Jesus is leaving his disciples, but he wants them to know he is not forsaking them. "I will not leave you as orphans," he says, "I will come to you." "I will be there with you." Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was there with the disciples then as He is with all of us now and will be with our children's, children's children.

But there is a second way in which Jesus Christ comforts his disciples. He comforts us with His understanding and love. Physical presence is wonderful, of course, but it is not enough. We need not only someone who is there, but someone who understands and forgives us and it is here where Jesus shines. No one was more understanding than Jesus. See him holding little children in his arms and sitting on his lap. See his concern for the poor, the sick, the suffering, the physically and mentally challenged, for the person whose life has been broken by sin, for the person whose heart is broken by the loss death brings, for the children who have lost their mother, for the spouse who has

lost their beloved, for the penitent thief on the cross, for the oppressed, the sad, the angry and the marginalized. The Good News of today's gospel from John is that we learn the nature of God. We find the direct reflection of God mirrored in the life of Jesus. Jesus teaches us about that divine nature when he says, *"In that day you shall know that I am in My Father."* Jesus and God are of one being and character. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. The comfort that the Holy Spirit provides is the same comfort Jesus Christ would provide if he were still here physically today. It is the comfort of empathy and understanding.

I recently read a story about a bank in Pennsylvania where they trained their employees to get "a better feel" for customers with handicaps? Employees of the 180 branches of the Meridian banking group had to fill out deposit slips with Vaseline smeared on their glasses and count money with three fingers on each hand taped together. The idea was to give them a better understanding of what older customers with glaucoma or arthritis may be going through.

What a difference a little empathy, a little understanding, can make in a relationship or in any situation of life.

But there's one thing more to be said. Christ not only sends his Spirit to be with us and empathize with us and comfort us; Jesus Christ gives you and me the power to adapt, improvise, overcome and conquer our fears and

problems. *"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you," said Jesus.*

"After a little while the world will behold me no more; but you will behold me; because I live, you shall live also." How many people have been encouraged by those words? How many of us who have buried sons and daughters, husbands and wives, parents and loved ones and good friends know the comfort of these words. "Because I live, you shall live also." Because Jesus is with us, we can cope, we can endure, we can adapt, we can improvise, we can overcome and we can conquer the problems and obstacles in our lives.

A parent who is there is wonderful. A parent who understands is even better. But best of all is the parent who prepares us with the discipline necessary to cope with life and gives us the tools to succeed.

In 1942, hysteria over Japanese involvement in World War II led to the relocation of some 110,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps. In one of these camps, Carole Doi, a third-generation Japanese American, was born.

Years later, Carole married a man who had also spent time in the camps.

When she delivered their baby daughter, they noticed that the child's feet turned inward, the toes facing each other. Carole was determined to do whatever it would take to help her daughter walk normally.

For four years Carole provided the child with corrective shoes. Her daughter was walking normally by age six, but Carole wasn't satisfied. "I wanted her to

do anything in which she would use her legs," she says. The girl chose ice skating. The girl was a natural on the ice. Before long, the youngster was bugging her mother for more rink time. She would refuse to leave the ice until she got a particular move right. Soon Carole was rising at 4 a.m. to get her daughter to the rink. Finally, after 15 years of lessons, young Kristi Yamaguchi represented her country in the Olympic Games. As the U.S. flag was hoisted during the 1992 medals ceremony, Carole and Jim Yamaguchi watched Kristi receive the gold medal. Kristi Yamaguchi stood on that victory platform because of a mother who stood behind her and helped her conquer a disability.

"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you," said Jesus, "...because I live, you shall live also." There it is! There is the promise we need: The Spirit that comforts us is not only one of presence, not only one of understanding, but it is one of overcoming. It is like a mother slowly helping her daughter walk with straight feet. It is that Spirit that gives us wings like eagles to soar. We honor our mothers this morning. But more importantly, we honor God who is like a loving parent who is ever present, ever empathizing and ever giving us the strength to overcome. Because God loves and lives, we can love and live! Happy Mothers' Day ladies. We love you and we live blessed by the presence of your lives in our lives. Amen.