

6 Easter B SML 2021
JN 15:9-17

All of us are always taken by babies. I remember over 25 years ago, I was to slated to give a talk to half the diocese in the southern end of the diocese and so I stayed the night before at my Mom and Dad's in Marlton, who were babysitting my niece, who was just a baby. She getting married this Memorial Day weekend.

Holding a baby is something of a tonic . . . there is nothing more soothing than holding a sleeping baby. My Mom asked me to hold Katie til she fell asleep. So I agreed. We went downstairs, just Katie and me, and I became overwhelmed with the fear of waking her up. What happens if she cries? And I remember my heart started racing and I started sweating and all the rest of it. So after I did hold Katie to sleep and put her down, I came into the kitchen and I must have looked like I had fought the war and my Mom asked, "What happened to you?" So I told her how I was so afraid of waking Katie up. "You are giving a talk tomorrow morning to half the diocese, and you're afraid of Katie waking up . . ."

This story comes to mind today as it's Mother's Day, and it also comes to mind today because today's readings speak of love, and what better day to focus on love than Mother's Day.

The gospel continues from last week where Jesus makes an analogy. He is the vine. We are the branches. Remain in him to bear much fruit. And what is the fruit? Love. Simply love. Since God is love says the second reading, then remaining in God is remaining in love and the fruit that produces is love. But not the love that the world produces, not the:

- ✓ goey,
- ✓ sappy,
- ✓ Hallmarky,
- ✓ ultimately disposable love,

but a love:

that remains,

- ✓ a love that endures,
- ✓ a love that is unconditional
- ✓ a love that is not always convenient
- ✓ a love that is not always much fun
- ✓ a love that is there whether it is emotionally exhilarating or not.

The connection between being disciples of Jesus and loving as a mother loves is found in that word “remain.” Jesus repeats the word remain eight times in last week’s gospel and three times in this week’s gospel. He commands and implores us to remain in Him. We must persevere in love, because He knows by the 15th chapter of John that things are going to get very difficult very soon for His disciples, as His ministry of:

- ✓ miracles
- ✓ and feel good sermons
- ✓ and crowds of popularity

will give way

- ✓ to His passion,
- ✓ a sentence of death
- ✓ and the crowds shouting “Crucify.”

Remain means:

- ✓ be steadfast.
- ✓ persevere.
- ✓ a patience that never quits,
- ✓ a love that never quits,
- ✓ in good times and in bad,
- ✓ in all the storms of life,
- ✓ in all the ups and downs.

Just like a vine, over the course of a year, is assaulted by the change in weather and the pruning and the plucking. Isn't that what a mother's love is.

I had a very sad introduction to my assignment at St. Mary of the Lakes in Medford, six years ago, when we buried Stephanie Bader, a 7th grade student who died of brain cancer two months before I was to arrive. I had never met this family, but I thought it the right thing to do to concelebrate the Mass for this student. There was a slide show at the end of the Mass that showed much of what the school community already knew, but I did not. The slides showed how much she suffered, and how hard she fought.

Her father gave a beautiful eulogy. And he spoke how:

- ✓ his daughter would never graduate,
- ✓ she would never fall in love,
- ✓ she would never marry,
- ✓ and she would never be a mother.

Her Dad said she would have been a wonderful mother because she had a wonderful mother, and he went on to speak of his wife's bravery and strength, and how she did not flinch:

- ✓ at every blow of bad news that the test results told,
- ✓ at every endless night of no sleep,

✓ at every trial and error of treatment.

And the heads in the congregation nodded and there was not a dry eye in the church.

And from there, I went to visit my own Mother. And while my Mother was spared the sorrow of burying a child, she was not spared the sorrow of burying a grandchild; she had “her share” as has every mother in this Church. Stated simply, when my Mother could, she did. And when she couldn’t, my brothers, my sister and I did for her, because when my Mother could, she did, for us.

Because of a Mother’s ability to love as Jesus commands, because of her ability to remain, together, with our Dads, we, their children, bear much fruit, and become who we are today. That example of a mother’s love, that patience and perseverance of a mother’s love is exactly what Jesus is talking about when he says we must remain in Him.

How important it is to remain close to the Lord, whether we feel like it or not, whether the emotions are there, or not, just as our mothers persevered in showing great love for us. It costs much and demands much to be a great mother. So today, we want to honor you and thank you and pray for you who are our mothers, and ask God to richly bless you and pour

His graces upon you, and to pray in a special way for our Moms who are here on earth, or are nearing the end of their time on earth, or whether they are in heaven, as so many of our Mothers have heard Our Blessed Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful Mother. Come share Your master’s joy!”