

I remember the first time I held a newborn baby in my hand and it brought tears to my eyes as I thanked God for the gift of life. But at that very moment, I as a man felt quite inadequate, insufficient and incomplete because I cannot give life like women do. Only she can bring forth the totality of life into the world. Only a woman can bring life into the world, new life. She is in that sense, the complete package of life. So at that moment, as a man, I felt inadequate and incomplete.

Mothers, women in general, have a unique way of giving because when they give, they give totally. There is no holding back. The receiver becomes the most important person and as the giver, the woman holds nothing back. They give everything. And so thank you, mothers, women, for giving us life through your blood, through your very own body, and so you are worth celebrating. Happy Mother's Day.

We know that in sending Jesus to us, God held nothing back from us. Out of love for us, God has gifted us the totality of divine life in Jesus. Jesus is the total package and God held nothing back in delivering this gift to us. So in this sense, it seems only right to acknowledge God as a mother too. For the act of total giving and constant mothering nature God has, we can easily call God our mother too.

Jesus displays his complete love for us by giving himself up for the life of the world by dying for us. Before this act of self-giving, Jesus wanted to have one last meal, the last supper with his disciples. The gospel today comes from that farewell speech that Jesus gave his disciples at the last supper. He was worried about them, out of love and in a way, he was concerned for their welfare and he tells them to stay strong during this time of his absence.

Most of us manage through the day without being bothered by the question of life itself. What's the point of being here? It can take all our time and energy merely to cope with the day. So we are happy to leave these deeper questions to theologians and armchair philosophers. However, there are times when we are forced to pause because something happens that throws our routine into question, like the sudden death of a friend, of a beloved one, or in our case, the impact of the pandemic we are going through these days. Our life is thrown out of routine. Our routine is completely ruined. Things that we took for granted now look different from before. Ventures and achievements that we thought so important begin to look so insignificant. So we wonder where we are going, if anywhere. What direction do we want to take when our own very sense of direction seems to have been lost? We might feel that we are going round in circles but not really getting anywhere.

What Jesus does not give the disciples today in the gospel is a set of answers, a theology handbook that will answer all the questions and problems about life, suffering, and God. Jesus does not give us a handbook. There are no roadmaps given to us to steer us into the future. As Jesus heads to the cross after this, the gospel tells us that Jesus is not telling them, the disciples, that life is not without problems. Apparently, the presence of heaven on earth does not preclude the possibility of evil, suffering or death.

To understand this, it is necessary that we understand that theology of John the Evangelist, because for Luke, the glorification of Jesus happens in the Ascension. But for John, the glorification of Jesus happens on the cross, so the cross itself becomes the symbol of that glory of Jesus.

It's impossible for us to understand how and why God allows suffering, evil, diseases and death in this world. Perhaps the only thing that we can take comfort in is that well, "I'm in a better place. Compared to other people's sufferings, my suffering is insignificant." In fact, a lot of suffering in the world, I could be responsible for my own, but a lot of suffering in the world seems to be made by others and I seem to suffer. So, suffering in many forms is the story of our world, but not the whole story.

That's why our faith in Jesus takes a different turn. We accept suffering as part of our life, but we do not end there because we know that suffering is not the end. We are here, we are who we are because of Jesus, our very gift of life. It is Jesus and our faith in Jesus that helps us to understand suffering in the light of hope, in the light of resurrection. We see it not as an accident of fate that we are here, but we are God's unique gift to the world and Jesus is the life that brings that gift out.

But does all this help us to gain a direction? Are we still puzzled like the disciples? The disciples soon learn that leaving Jerusalem and going to the ends of the earth was the mission that Jesus left for them to bring about the kingdom. A kingdom of hope, a kingdom of joy, a kingdom of life. Jesus trusts us today, the followers of Christ, to take this message of hope even in the face of darkness. Looking to Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life doesn't actually solve the problem, but it actually heals, gives us new hope and the hope to trust in the words and the promise that Jesus gives us today.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in Jesus.