

Easter 7C 2013
Father Frank Matera
A Spirituality of Motherhood

This weekend we find ourselves between two great feasts: the Lord's ascension into heaven where he is enthroned at the right hand of the Father, and Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and created the church. This weekend, we also celebrate one of the most beloved days of the year, "Mother's Day." Although it is not a religious feast, it is a day with deep religious significance inasmuch as it celebrates God's gift of motherhood, a gift that expresses God's love for us in a concrete way. Motherhood is a gift that brings families and church into the unity that Jesus describes in today's gospel—a unity whereby we are one with God and one with each other.

Just as our faith is ever the same and ever-changing, so motherhood is ever the same and ever changing. Whereas an older generation still remembers when most mothers stayed at home, today many mothers are in the marketplace, sometimes out of choice, other times out of necessity. Moreover, we live at a time when many mothers are raising families without the help and support of a spouse. Despite these changes, what is most important about motherhood remains the same: a caring and nurturing love that enables children to grow and develop in a safe and secure environment, a love that brings unity to family and church.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our mothers and to all who faithfully live their vocation as mother's day in and day out. It was our mothers who gave us life through the pains of childbirth. It was our mothers who nurtured and cared for us when we could not care for ourselves. It was our mothers who loved us unconditionally, even when we fail. It was our mothers who guided and brought us to adulthood.

Motherhood is a vocation; it is the way that mothers attain sanctity and holiness in the Christian life. It is the way in which mothers are united with Christ each day of their life. It is a share in Christ's redemptive love; and when faithfully lived out motherhood leads to the fullness of life—life with Christ, resurrection life. Motherhood is a way to sanctify.

Consider for a moment, the mother who must work to support her family. She may have preferred to stay at home, but she could not; and so she sacrifices for her family. Or, consider the mother who would have liked to pursue a professional

career, but who, for the sake of her family, stayed at home. Or, consider the sacrifices made by a single mom who must support her family as well as herself. In other words, it is not what kind of mom you are—stay at home mom, career mom, single mom—it is the sacrifices you make for your family that bring you to Christian holiness.

There are lots of books about spirituality, but only a few books about the spirituality of motherhood. There are lots of saints in the Church's official calendar, but there are many more unheralded mothers who have become saints by the sacrifices they made for their families and children.

It is a joy to celebrate this Mother's Day with you; it is a joy to remember all of the mothers of our parish, living and deceased. You are the saints of our church and society; you are the saints who bring the gospel to the world by your self-sacrificing love. And so this is your day, and we rejoice with you.