

May 8, 2016

Mother's Day by Danna Prather Davis

Dear God, let the words of my mouth and mediation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, oh Lord our Rock and Redeemer.

Many of you know my mother was visiting me here during most of the month of April. I so enjoyed having her here and one afternoon she and I were sitting around discussing my son Zane when she said to me, "No one ever loves you as much as your mother." I'm very fortunate to have always had a great relationship with her, and I hope and pray that my relationship with Zane will grow to be as wonderful as the one I've had with my Mom.

It was actually on that day that Pastor Yuri contacted me and asked if I'd be willing to do the service on Mother's Day. Originally, as I reflected on my conversation with my Mom, I said yes, but then said ... but I'll just be doing the sermon, right? You'll still be doing everything else? Pastor Yuri quickly corrected me and told me that I would be responsible for the entire service, but that she would give me help based on last year's program.

Later Pastor Yuri informed me that her Mother had passed, and that she was leaving everything in my hands. She did send me the information from last year to help me, but she obviously had other, more personal issues to deal with. Although Pastor Yuri wasn't able to help me as much as she might have wanted, that doesn't mean I didn't receive help.

Of course, I talked with my Mother. She gave me suggestions, listened to ideas, asked Steve to record me, and gave me wonderful support.

I called my Auntie Beth, my Mother's sister, and the best Bible scholar I know personally and asked ..."so where does it talk about Mothers in the Bible?" She found me a huge list of passages, some helpful, others less so, but made a great sounding board for my ideas.

Locally, I spoke with Tom Bracken, who is serving as the liturgist today and stepped up as soon as I asked for his help and offered his time, phone number and email, and a passage from Revelations that he told me helped him when he was trying to find a place of stillness and listen to God's voice.

I asked all of you to contribute, if so moved, a comment about Mothers/love/God/and or children. Many of you responded and I thank you for that. Some people even went so

far as to offer up comments about either themselves as mothers or their relationships with their mothers not for public sharing, but to help me in my reflections and preparation.

John and Nancy from the office both offered to help in any way they could, and their assistance was much appreciated as well.

But of course I am not surprised by this outpouring of love and support, because, after all we sometimes talk about the Church as a Mother, and help and love are what mothers give without question.

Today's Gospel lesson was John 15:9-17

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Think about that last line a moment, “This is my command: Love each other.” This focus on love is so important because it is our clearest way to experience God. Think about our first reading, First John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

I'd like to share some of the quotes and sayings you shared with me with you now. These first few are discussing a Mother's love, mostly for her children, please forgive me where I edited a couple of them to make them make sense in this context:

“A mother loves her children even when they least deserve to be loved.”

"I'll always be there for you" (A Mother tells her child.)

“When you look at your mother, you are looking at the purest love you will ever know.”

“Love was everything a mother did to take care of her children, not something to talk about.”

“A mother's love endures through all.”

"I love you!" (A Mother tells her child.)

“Mother’s love is peace. It need not be acquired, it need not be deserved.”

“The bond between a mother and her child is the only real and purest bond in the world, the only true love we can ever find in our lifetime.”

My Mother didn’t tell us about love, even loving in the rough times - she lived it!

“I don't believe in love at first sight because my mother started loving me before seeing me.”

"I love you more than you can know." (A Mother tells her child.)

Now let’s consider those statements again, with the subject of the sentence being “God” rather than “Mother.”

God loves His children even (especially?) when they least deserve to be loved.

"I'll always be there for you" (God says to us all.)

When you look at God, you are looking at the purest love you will ever know.

Love was everything God did to take care of His children, not something to talk about.

God’s love endures through all.

"I love you!" (God says to us all.)

God’s love is peace. It need not be acquired (it can’t be, it is freely given), it need not be deserved (again, we are undeserving but still receive the Grace of God).

The bond between God and His child(ren) is the only real and purest bond in the world, the only true love we can ever find in our lifetime.

God didn’t tell us about love, even loving in the rough times - He lived it! (As we see in John 3:16).

I don't believe in love at first sight because God started loving me before seeing me.

"I love you more than you can know." (God tells us all.)

A bible scholar and theology professor once asked a class of students to think about God. To really visualize God in their minds. He gave the class a few minutes to think, then asked if they had an idea of God in their minds. Once the students replied in the affirmative, the professor told them, whatever you've thought is not God. His point was not to tease the students, but rather to point out that God is beyond our earthly ability to think of and know.

So although we can't know the unknowable – God -- in this life, perhaps the love of a Mother, Aunt, Grandmother, Female caregiver, or even the Church-as-Mother can help us imagine God through the experience of love. Perhaps we can see a reflection of God's love for us, in a Mother's love for her child or children.

There were a few other lines that were shared with me that didn't fit in my schema so well, but I still want to share them with you because I think they are so nice.

"My dear daughter: If ever there is a tomorrow when we're not together; there is something you must always remember.: You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think. BUT, the most important thing is: Even if we're apart, I'll always be with you."

"God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers."

"Mother is the name of God on the lips and in the hearts of children."

With all this thinking about love, I wondered what my son might say about the topic. I tell him I love him every day, and during prayers and lullaby every night I remind him he is loved by Steve and I, by other family members and friends, and by God. So I asked Zane, who is three and a half, how he knew he was loved, he said, "I love other people so they love me too." What a great idea for us to remember, love other people, perhaps we can even think of it as loving our neighbors as ourselves?

This made me think about how children think about love and again my Mother came to my rescue with some quotes from children ages three to eight about what love is. Here's what the children said:

'When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.'

'If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate,'

'Love is what makes you smile when you're tired.'

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.'

So let's all try to stop and listen. Let's try to hear love, to hear God.

Amen.