

Anglican Church of Freiburg
Mother's Day
Homily

John 10:22-30

Introduction

What is the first word that comes to our minds when we think of our mothers? For those of us whose mothers are alive- most would be longing to be by their side, give and receive the warmth of a hug and cherish the fragrance of their presence and the taste of their favourite cuisine.

For those of us whose mothers have already travelled ahead to the other shore, we look up to the heavens and shout out a Halleluiah for who they are in our lives and for teaching us the joy and hope of resurrection.

Having said this, I do acknowledge that mother is not a pleasant memory for several people who live among us. Some even does not find anything substantial to celebrate this day.

It was a painting competition and the theme that was given was MOTHER. As you would imagine there were some fantastic paintings. Right from the world of nature and landscape, through surrealist, impressionist, abstract expressionist or realistic genres there were some exemplary paintings. But the person who evaluated them saw one painting special. Some brush marks in black. He asked for the painter only to listen to a horrific story of pain from a mother

Perhaps that was only an aberration. Or looking around the world today, is it?

Several people object to the celebration of Mother's Day saying it is just a successful commercial agenda while others say there is nothing wrong in having a special day for mothers.

In the seven traditional forms of art be it Painting, Sculpture, Literature, Architecture, Theatre, Film or Music, motherhood was always a powerful theme

For us as a church despite all its patriarchal bias motherhood was always a strong theme of discourses. Reimagining God as mother was an integral element of womanist readings of the Bible.

For the question, which version of the Bible is the most popular, we have always said it is the version according to my mother

The Gospel lesson that we heard read is basically about a good shepherd but in the discourses of the mothering face of God some of the attributes that are given here fits well with mothers. I would want to draw a few insights

- a. To celebrate our memory of our mothers
- b. To celebrate the joy of our mothers
- c. To help the mothers to be think seriously of their responsibilities as a mother
- d. To remind the mothers around us to seriously reflect on the challenges of motherhood
- e. To be in solidarity with all for whom motherhood brings painful images

1. **The Sense of Belonging:** The Shepherd affirms that 'My Sheep belongs to Me'

Mothers are walking miracles. Their hearts can expand to include their children in a manner no one can easily comprehend. The scriptures continuously affirm the promise of God- They shall be My People and I shall be their God and this mothering embrace is considered to the very nature of God.

Ideally, there is no other place where you feel so belonged as in the bosom of your mother.

We today praise the Lord for this sense of belongingness

Having said this, I do acknowledge again, of several children who wish if their mothers behaved differently and owned them better.

Love is all about belonging and belonging is basically about motherhood.

2. **The Sense of Listening-** They Hear My Voice

Mothers understand even what the child does not say. Yes, even anything that they wish to communicate but not explicitly do. The image of the Shepherd is so presented that each of the sheep hears the voice of the shepherd, recognises it and listens to it.

The mother is one who listens to the children and the children are the ones who listens to their mothers. Listening to the heart-throb of each other is the beauty of good relationships.

The voice of my mother kept ringing in my ears years after she went to be part of the stars. She kept telling me- My Son Do Not Give Up. This was the testimony of a very successful entrepreneur.

3. **The Sense of Knowing-** I know Them

No one knows the child better than the mother. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses, mood swings and expectations, positives and challenges. Mothers know that the children expect them to be their friend. They know about their screen addictions and the modern-day challenges. They know what they look for, what they enjoy and what they don't. They know their emotional temperament, naughtiness and extravaganzas.

Most shepherds know their sheep by name and the specialities of each sheep. They immediately know if a sheep is ill or if one is missing. They know how to keep them in the fold and what are the likings and disliking of each. Motherhood is like that.

Having someone who knows you is a great blessing because before them you need not pretend or play act but can be your true self

Several people today long to have someone who knows them, understands them and appreciates them as they are. And there is no one like the mother in this regard.

4. **The Sense of Guiding- They Follow Me**

"A mother is one who can take the place of all others but whose place no one else can take." Like the sheep explicitly following the Shepherd and the Shepherd guiding the sheep to greener pastures and still waters guiding is an art. With the weather changing we know of our friends who will now take their herd to graze and would remain with the flock for a few weeks together, guiding them. We had a good discussion about such a couple yesterday in our Men's Breakfast.

To have someone as a guide in your life is a great blessing. Having the mother as a navigator through highways and byways of life is a blessing indeed.

The basic areas children need guidance include in nurturing trusting relationships, discerning good and the bad, be it good touch and bad touch or the good gaze or the bad gaze, making the right and appropriate choices in life, healthy living habits, using appropriate words, helping own the consequences of actions, facing challenges in life. To be inclusive, just and peace loving. The list can go on.

We are what we are today because our mothers guided us this way.

5. **The Sense of Offering Fullness of Life-**

Life does not come with a manual. It comes with a mother. The Shepherd makes it clear that he has come that the flock may have life and life in all its fullness. How do we offer fullness of life to our children

and that mostly happen by providing a happy childhood. There are some single mothers who have offered the best possible life for their children. There are some couples who stayed despite the challenges within so that the children has the best of life, the fullness of life.

Fullness of Life is communicated when we teach our children Life is to be Lived in Full. The life here defines the hereafter and therefore need to be lived well and meaningful.

Are we able to live life in its fullness today? Mothers had a role in that for sure

6. The Sense of Protection- They never perish

God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers. The UNICEF always campaigns for the rights of children to live protected from violence, exploitation, and abuse. Protection in the modern day is a much more complex reality because the snares that the dark web enticing them are far more complex than we could ever imagine.

Protection affirms the right of children to avail the highest available standard of health, non-discrimination and the right not to be abducted and forced into contexts that they are not supposed to be in.

Protection is also from all the present-day complexities of drug abuse, alcoholism and behavioural excesses.

The protection that the shepherd offers is from predators, wild animals, going astray, falling into crevices and missing from the flock.

Mothers desire that the children never perish and that they have a good life in all aspects of living.

7. The Sense of Ownership- No one will take them away from me

The heart of a mother is a deep abyss at the bottom of which you will always find forgiveness. No one can take the child away from a mother. We have stories of mothers who have lost children but who have lived the rest of their lives cherishing the memories of their dear departed. Even death could not steal them away.

When I was Chaplain to the Prisons I have seen mothers as consistent visitors. The fact that their children had become hardcore convicts did not take away the love of a mother. There were three kinds of visits sometimes- pastoral, professional and personal and I always gave priority to the one who came with a personal reason to see the person. The Mother owns us more than any other. That was why we were cuddled and cherished.

At a flood a mother saw her hut being washed. She rang and saved the baby who was full of mud and started kissing. People said- wash the child and then kiss. She replied I did not see the mud- saw only my baby

Conclusion: We would never ever reach an answer to the question- if mothers day should be celebrated at all. Some people would keep saying no and some others would say yes, and we will still have the people who abstain. But Mothers are Mothers Anyway and let us thank the Lord for the same.

We will thank God for God's mothering love and we pray that we would have more and more stories of wonderful mothers to celebrate.

In our modern context I do acknowledge there could be families without mothers but everyone of us have mothers and we thank you Lord for the same this day.

Abraham Lincoln rightly said, No person is poor who has a Godly mother.

May I conclude with Eve Mariams dream
I dream of being a mother to a child who would one day ask me- Mom what is this war that people talk of in history books!!!

We need mothers who dare to dream

Vinod Victor
May 8, 2022