

Easter 6C/Mother's Day Sermon 050910
Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67
Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5
John 14:23-29; or John 5:1-9

In the tradition of the Late Show with David Letterman, here are my Top Ten Things a Mom Would Not Say.

10. "How on earth can you see the TV sitting so far back?"
9. "I used to skip school a lot, too. It's exciting, huh?"
8. "Just leave all the lights on ... I know your father won't mind."
7. "Let me smell that shirt – Yeah, it's good for at least another week."
6. "Keep the stray dog, honey. I'll be glad to feed and walk him every day."
5. "Forget about medical school. I think you're really cut out to be a street corner musician."
4. "If you're not in before curfew, don't worry. I'll probably be asleep anyway."
3. "I don't have a tissue with me ... just use your sleeve"
2. "Don't bother wearing a jacket – it'll probably warm up sometime today."

And the number 1 thing a mom would *not* say.

1. "Has it been a month since you called? I hadn't even noticed."

Happy Mother's Day. Today we celebrate moms: who they are in our lives; what their presence means, and has meant to us; how they have impacted who we are and what we have become. And since Mother's Day is not on the Church calendar, it is more than a little miraculous that today's Gospel reading fits the occasion so well.

In the passage from the 14th chapter that Tracie just read, Jesus is in the midst of what is known as His Farewell Discourse. In it, John tells us that Jesus was explaining to the Disciples that He would not be around much longer. He was trying to prepare them for His death, resurrection and ascension. Jesus said,

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ***But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.***

This week I read a description, created by a pastor named Paul Duke. It is,

(as if Jesus was) a mother standing with her hand on the doorknob, her coat over her arm, watching her children play with Legos on the living room floor. One of them looks up suddenly and, noticing that she is about to leave, asks:

"Where are you going?"

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also."

"Can we go with you?"

"Where I am going you cannot come."

"How long will you be gone?"

"A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while and you will see me."

"Who will take care of us?"

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever."¹

If you look at it the way the author of that piece, Pastor Paul Duke did, then what the Holy Spirit is for us is: the one who is the replacement, the babysitter if you will, for the time that Jesus is away from us children. But if you look at what John meant by the term he used for the Holy Spirit, it turns out that the description was much more like a mother – in actual fact, much more like a “mom” – than like a babysitter.

¹ Somerville, James C., *Christian Century*, May 6, 1998, p. 471

The Greek word παρακλητος (paracletos) – Paraclete (the Holy Spirit) – has been translated in various places as: Advocate; Comforter; Counselor and Helper. It has been suggested that the Holy Spirit is the one you call to argue your case if you’ve been wrongfully accused; the one you call when you’ve had a nightmare and it’s 3:00 a.m.; the one you go to if you’re depressed and need someone to confide in; and the one you call if you just cannot figure things out. That, my brothers and sisters in Christ, is a mom.

I think that Pastor Duke who wrote about Jesus being the mom, leaving the kids, might have gotten the metaphors just a little off. Perhaps the better image is ... Jesus as the dad, going off on a business trip. And He is telling the kids that He’ll be back, but in the meantime, they have someone to care for them who is going to teach them all they need to know and who is going to care for them and support them even as He returns. That’s what moms do. They care for us, teach us, advocate for us and make us feel better when things aren’t going our way.

I recently read an essay by a woman who talked about how motherhood had changed her life, and what it had meant to her. Here is part of what she had to say:

Before I was a Mom I slept as late as I wanted and never worried about how late I got into bed. I brushed my hair and my teeth every day.

Before I was a Mom - I cleaned my house each day. I never tripped over toys and I didn't worry whether or not my plants were poisonous.

Before I was a Mom - I had never held down a screaming child so that doctors could do tests. Or give shots. I never looked into teary eyes and cried too. I never got gloriously happy over a simple grin. I never sat up late hours at night watching a baby sleep.

Before I was a Mom - I never held a sleeping baby just because I didn't want to put it down. I never felt my heart break into a million pieces when I couldn't stop the hurt. I never knew that something so small could affect my life so much. I never knew that I could love someone so much

Before I was a Mom - I had never gotten up in the middle of the night every 10 minutes to make sure all was okay. And I had never known the warmth. The joy. The love. The heartache. The wonderment. Or the satisfaction of being a Mom. I didn't know I was capable of feeling so much, before I was a Mom.

The Holy Spirit is often portrayed in Scripture as the wind, or as fire – things we cannot really see as having human attributes. But the Spirit is also the aspect of God that is sometimes spoken of in feminine terms. And since it was the Spirit that was sent by Jesus to provide us with advice, counsel, comfort and help in times of trouble, perhaps – at least some times in some places – the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete is actually a mom.

That Spirit is here as our assurance that Jesus has not left us alone and that He will be coming back. So that same Spirit is the spirit of *love* – just as our Savior was, and is. The Spirit of Love is with us today in many ways, most of all in the love provided in the form of our mothers. Thank you moms for all you do. But most of all for being the embodiment of the Spirit of God's love in the world.

Amen.