

Author: Papp Gy. László. Hungarian original was published on Papp Gy László's web site with the title: "Anyák Napja". All copyrights remain with the author.

UnitarianTorch contact: kokenyesi@unitariantorch.com

Mother's Day

John 19:25

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother"

The poet Letay Lajos wrote:

"For her, searching out a flower, even if it was the very last flower, I would

To her, bringing the light of a star, even if it was the last star, I would

For her, learning to sing, even if it was like the last songbird, I would

To her, offering everything beautiful and fine, I would

All for my Mother.

Dear Brother and Sisters,

We celebrate Mother's Day in our familiar environment, surrounded by familiar faces. We do this, like all other Christians who, with outstretched arms, offer flowers to their mothers. To mothers who are alive, and to mothers who live on only in our memories. Our celebration might also be able to help, to a small degree, to make up for missed opportunities for those who never expressed their gratitude to that mother who gave them birth, to that mother who nurtured and educated them, to that mother who worried about them, and who prayed for them, so their life would take a turn for the better.

Moreover, the message of our service today will be directed not only to those in our community who are celebrating with their mother, but also to those relationships where the mothers are perceived as imperfect or even absentee mothers. We don't want to fall into the predicament of the remorseful poet who wrote: "It bothers my conscience that I didn't call my mother to wish her Happy Mother's Day, Because while I was dialing

her number my regretful conscience made me write this poem about what bothers my conscience.”

You may have noticed from my selection of the bible quote, that I will examine mother’s day from an unorthodox angle. I always share my reason for biblical text selections, and today is no exception; so, here is my reasoning. I chose this quote, because we see many examples in our every day lives of mothers standing by their children. I mentioned earlier, that there are exceptions to this, but I will not focus on those mothers today.

While you might find this unusual, the thought of the many roles mothers play in their children’s lives hit me like a storm around the time of the passing of my own mother. It all came to me during her last few difficult days. In those days I came to recognize how important was the supporting, care giving roles of my mother, the very roles I experienced on so many occasions. As I was recalling the caring actions of my mother I suddenly turned away from the negative experiences of those days, and I felt a surge of this feeling of me wanting to care for others. And, somehow all those feelings were converted into a spirit of unselfish love. I haven’t felt like that before, not even when I was taking care of my own children, including the changing of their diapers.

Inside me a recognition was growing stronger; the recognition that mother always stand on their children’s side even when they are not in physical proximity. It is that recognition that was made more explicit by the example of the mother of Jesus. That mother who cared for Jesus during his childhood, and stood by him near the cross through that time of ultimate suffering.

Let us explore first the types of hardships where the mother of Jesus had a supporting role, and then we use a writer’s words to gain better clarity. We have many instances during the life of Jesus where hardship is unmistakable. I will be adding some of my interpretations to maintain the focus of this sermon. First, let us observe the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. We see a few unusual surroundings which are not dissimilar to conditions that characterized the birth of many well accomplished greats of humanity. However, the surroundings of the birth of Jesus are not only unusual because of the poverty. We have to add to the list the extreme vulnerability and exclusion. All these circumstances may have created early emotional scars. We don’t know many facts about the childhood of Jesus, but I’m convinced that his God-inspired behavior might have brought him into conflict, especially with older kids. That kind of conflict and suffering may be caused, on one hand, by a society where God’s presence

was artificially removed. We are all well acquainted with that. Additionally, such conflict may also be caused by those who hate devoted believers, and by those who want to inflict pain on people whose love is boundless. When Jesus left his parents' house his life didn't become less challenging or less difficult. As an adult and as a prophet Jesus ran up against many obstacles that are revealed to us in the Bible. We read that on many occasions he wasn't welcome by open arms when he brought God's message. The events that followed his entry into Jerusalem show us more details of his suffering. There, the very people who celebrated him just a short while before, now are yelling "Crucify Him". Those very people no longer cared about his suffering and about his death that was predictably coming at the end of the legal process.

I understand that it is emotionally difficult to revisit all these scenes; however, we have to do it to place the mother of Jesus at those scenes. Even when a particular Bible passage doesn't mention her, we can be secure in our thoughts that through her prayers she always accompanied Jesus. It's my conclusion that mothers express a part of their conscience, and a part of their soul when they pray for their children. My personal experience is the best to show that it takes many years to develop the understanding how incredibly indispensable mothers are. And now, after the passing of my own mother, I began to act like her. While my prayers may not be as deeply emotional as the prayers of my wife, but I'm doing something similar, something I'm compelled to do, to pray for a better future for my children. The mother of Jesus prayed for her child the same way as today's mothers pray for their children. Some mothers might be praying right here as we speak. The writer Marai Sandor sees it like this: When life strikes you a blow, wounds your soul, accept it as the part of natural order for a mortal. Why would you expect anything else? You are a mortal human being, and your loved ones may pass away, your friends may abandon you, and everything you amassed and everything you cherished may scatter as dust in a whirlwind. All that may happen as the part of natural order. What is miraculous that you don't suffer those blows every day. You are a mortal human, but your suffering is not unceasing."

I remember when I was a little boy that I would diligently prepare for Mother's Day. I would learn the Mother's Day poem, but when I was started telling the poem to my mother something in the poem would make me burst into tears, so much so, that I couldn't even hand the bouquet of flowers to my mother. On the opposite side there is the story of the little boy who, in a kindergarten Mother's Day ceremony, recited his chosen poem well, but when it came to find her mother in the rows, and give her the flower, he couldn't. As it turned out he was an orphan, and the kindergarten folks forgot

to assign a stand-in person to substitute for his mother. Everybody at that ceremony was gasping as the event unfolded. The saddest side of that story is not that the boy was an orphan, and he had to suffer that humiliating experience, but that there is no answer to the questions like Who will follow that boy's life with tearful protection, with the care, with the prayers, and with the inexhaustible forgiveness only mothers can provide.

As a grown man I now comprehend how much we need our mothers. Such a recognition brings up the following question: Whose prayers will support and safeguard those who lost their mothers? Perhaps, our emotional reaction of being concerned and caring towards others in our prayers should be abandoned. Perhaps, the problems of others may just be dissolved like this writer's tears?

Paul Coelho writes: "By the river Piedra I sat down and wept. There is a legend that everything that falls into the waters of this river, leaves, insects, feathers of birds, transforms into rocks that make up the river bed. If only I could tear out my heart and hurl it into the current, then my pain and longing would be over, and I could finally forget. By the river Piedra I sat down and wept. On that cold winter day my tears flowed down my cheeks into the icy waters billowing next to my feet. This river will merge with others, and then, far from my sight, and from my heart the waters will merge with the ocean. Take my tears the farthest away; don't let me sweetheart see them, to see that I cried for her. Take my tears the farthest away; allow me to forget her, the river, the church, the fog, the times we spent together. Release me from the walking path of my dreams. Release me from my dreams of mountains and meadows; release me from the dreams O know and the dreams I was yet to see."

Let us not forget that while many of us already experienced the desire to pray for the well being of others, in many people this consideration is still evolving. All along countless fellow human beings yearn for the care and concern that comes from prayers, as those people are suffering the ravages of daily strife.

Let us not forget that those in need are lifted up by our prayers, as well as those who constantly battle to reach their dreams of a better future.

Let us help them so they have a better chance to reach their dreams. Let us help them, because they are the people who bring into our lives the excitement of anticipation that their lives will take a turn for the better. Let us help them, because we can then share with them the gladness when they fulfill their hopes and dreams.

How do we, who pray, benefit from all this? Our lives will be more fulfilling; we will grow more loving toward the fellow human beings God placed into our lives, and we become more appreciating of God's actions.

May God bless all the living mothers, and may God bring eternal rest to those mothers who have departed from this Earthly life.

Amen.