

Sermon May 10, 2015 - Easter 6 – Mother's Day

## “A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mother”

John 15:1-8



Happy Mother's Day to all of you Moms! I pray that by God's grace you'll enjoy all the attentions that your children and loved ones will give you today, or have given already. You deserve them, so enjoy them! Take pleasure in God's blessing today. For today is Mother's day!

It was by the campaign that Mrs. Anna Jarvis, a peace activist, that Mother's Days was established since the early 1900. However, Anna Jarvis became disillusioned with how Mother's Day evolved, and in particular with the commercialization of the holiday. Jarvis told reporters shortly before her death at age of 84 that she was sorry she had ever started Mother's Day."

But now, here we are almost a century later and Mother's Day still continues. How different those two eras can be for sure. A century apart is a long time. Mother's profiles back then can be seen a bit different I would say, compared to the 21 century profiles. But then again what does it take, or what does it mean to a Mother in this century?

The Smithsonian<sup>1</sup> institute group in an article as this question: “What Makes a 21st Century Mom?” They say it is not an easy answer.” But they provide 10 recent studies based on science of course, on what it means to be a mother today, among those studies all mention a few:

First: Mother's need to nurture their children especially in times of stress, that will help them to cope with stress later in life.

Second: “He's not overweight, he's under tall: A report published in this month's issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* discovered that an overwhelming majority of mothers in a recent study thought their overweight babies were the perfect size. And more than 20 percent of the mothers whose babies were an ideal weight thought their kids should be bigger.”

Third: She's such a digital diva: Lose the notion that moms are behind the digital curve. A survey of more than 2,500 mothers, done for BabyCenter, found that almost two-thirds of them were using smart phones and that they were 28 percent more likely than the average person to own a digital tablet. Plus, they're 50 percent more likely to watch video on the Web compared to the general population. And now one out of three bloggers are moms.

Fourth: And she's on that Facebook all the time: And another study, this one of 3,000 Americans, concluded that mothers are more likely to visit Facebook daily than other women (85 % to 73 %) and are also more likely than other women to buy something based on a recommendation on a social network (42 % to 29 %).

Fifth: “Good Cooks” the report says that “If British men truly reflect their gender, a lot of sons would rather eat their mother's cooking than their wives'. More than half of those

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/whatmakesa21stcenturymom85092216/?noist>

questioned in a survey said they preferred their mom's meals, and roughly a third said they thought their mothers took extra time and care cooking, while they felt their wives were more likely to dish up prepared food.

Interesting things for sure, but whatever Moms do we certainly appreciate therefore today we honor all Moms. Here is a video greeting for each on you... (video)

The video does certainly point to another face of motherhood doesn't it.

Now there is another element that Mother's need to consider in their profile on this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the spiritual formation of their children. Although this formation and education, falls under the two parents, no question! Under the leadership of the father, but the reality is that in most cases the mother is the one who does the work. It is the mother that becomes more preoccupied with the Spiritual welfare of the children. That spiritual formation is certainly crucial as we face the day we are facing now, and what is to come.

For that purpose I would like to use as our text of meditation last's Sunday Gospel reading from the Gospel of John chapter 15 verses 1-8 where Jesus says: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

These words do apply to every Christian, but on this day I would like to explore them in the context of the vocations of Motherhood!

Jesus said: "I am the vine; you are the branches." (V. 5) All of us Christians and specially you Mothers are to receive strength from Jesus who is the True Vine.

As brunches, if we break away from him, we will be unproductive, and soon we will dry up, soon to be pruned out.

What can we make of this lesson in terms of our daily life? What does it mean to be God's vineyard? How does it apply to Mothers? What does this text offer to Moms in this twenty first century?

The fruit that God expects from us will be the equivalent to marvellous grapes that can create the finest wine. In Mediterranean cultures, grapes have only one end: to be made into wine. And wine, as Scripture teaches us, is not for drunkenness and stupor—which is a perversion of its use—but to make glad the heart of man. And what is it that makes a mom, a MOM? Well her fruits, her words and deeds for her children and for others as well. All of those things will bring glory to God because they make will make the world glad, they bring joy to the world. God so loved the world that he wanted the world to live and to live abundantly so when the world believes and trusts truthfulness of God's words, and it lives and rejoices in its life. That is the intent of the fruit that the branches produce. That is the product of the work of God through His Son Jesus. For those who have been saved and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are

enabled to lead and to live the converted life, the life of gratitude, a life filled with good works, a life overflowing with fruit. Jesus says: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit ..." The Father is glorified when we bear fruit.

Mom, your fruit will be seen in the faith of your children, and your children's children. It will be seen how you warmed their heart, will be seen in how you passed to them your faith values and principles. So that in turn your children will grow to be men and women of good, also bearing good fruit for the glory and honour of God. And most important in your patience and your dedication to wait until your child will begin to walk in God's ways.

It is to our knowledge that many moms have been an example to their children in faith and perseverance, and yet their children don't want to be in that relationship with God. Does it mean that their parents have failed? No, just that their hearts have hardened blocking the Holy Spirit to work in them, and yet, this is a part of our good deeds too, the fact that you keep praying for them, so that one day they begin to walk in God's ways.

Just as in a grapevine, there are branches that don't produce, so is with us. Jesus is very forthright about those branches that do not produce such fruit, instead cause much pain in the world. Cause death where they go: they are dead and will be cut off and thrown away.

You may say: "this is very harsh", but the vinedresser knows that branches that do not contribute to growth do nothing; they are already dead. It is not harsh: it just means recognizing what is alive and what is dead and removing the dead so that the living can get on with life. So, yes there is such a thing as an unproductive life. And there comes a time when the vinedresser must cut back the branches in order for there to be growth in a coming season.

This is probably the most difficult part of this lesson. Non-producing vines must be removed to give way for those who are producing good fruit. No joy production, no faith, no hope. We don't want that to happen, do we?

Now, just like there are bad vines in a vineyard, and there are also bad branches in a good vine, so in the same way on a personal level we have stuff that needs to be pruned, that needs to be taken away, it might be our character, it might be the way how we see life, it might be our own selfish thinking, whatever it is, God wants to fix us so that we grow stronger.

God the Father is the vinedresser and, though you may not like what the vinedresser does, you can be assured that he does it for a purpose and that purpose is the continued production of a wine that will gladden all of creation.

So as you put your trust in God, and approach him in confession, seeking His forgiveness, you will notice that God will be pruning you of all the bad stuff in your life. This does not always mean a hard thing, rather, God will help us to get rid of all the unproductive stuff in our lives. There are things that sometimes we hold dear to, or consider important, or things that we like more, and yet those same things become a hindrance for us to produce good fruit. Don't think God is punishing you when you feel a God is convincing you and asking you to get rid of those things. Pruning takes many forms, none of them ever easy.

But, do not fear the work of the vine-dresser. It is the work of the Father himself, who knows what His creation needs. It is he who did not even spare his own son, who,

when the pruning comes stands stripped of almost all its branches, naked and humbled in the midst of the field hanging on a cross; making Him to be sin in our place, in our stead, leaving Him before the world as a laughing stock, a dead trunk! People say: "look at that trunk. It's nothing. It will never produce again." But then on the third day we rose victorious from the grave conquering death, winning life for us.

Today, people might say about you: Look at that Lady, she goes to church, and too much church, church, and church, doesn't she have anything better to do? O but we know that we don't come to church to waste our time; you don't come to church just because you don't have anything better to do! In fact being in God's house of prayer, the Church is the one thing better to do. We know that remaining in him, and he in us, whatever we ask the Father, in order to glorify the Father, he will do.

So Mothers as you face this century, as you are a Mom and this 21<sup>st</sup>. Century, do not fear; rather, ask God for abundant fruits, and then go forth and bring joy to the world, a world that God so loves.

But in order for you to do that, Jesus tells us that "remain in the vine" means being attentive, tuned in, and plugged in to what the Father is saying and doing so that you can hear and see what the Father is saying and doing. And this happens by attending to the manifestation of the great I AM through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus goes so far as to say that that is all that you should ultimately be concerned about, what the Father says and what the Father does, because everything else that is said and done only has the appearance of truth and worth, and will not last forever. But being "remained in the vine" to the Jesus, means dwelling with the Father -- watching the Father, knowing the Father's actions, imitating the Father in what he says and does -- that that is all that you do, knowing that WHAT you do will be what produces the rich fruit of the vine in this world.

Mothers, and why not all of us, think about how much we say and how much we do in our lives, activities and words that simply are intended to fill up the silence of our lives. What Jesus wants us to be quiet, be still, stop buzzing around with busy-ness and needless activity, instead think about what really counts, for in this way we glorify our Father. Being "plugged in" means to stop and listen for the Father's voice, and it means to stop and looking for what He is doing in us and for us.

We are branches, and Jesus is the vine. We are here to bear fruit. As our Lord Himself says, (Jn 15:5) "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Jesus as the Vine empowers all faithful Mothers and all Christians, to praise His name and bear much fruit for His glory and honour. We do salute you fruitful mother whoever you are, this is how we honor you. In His name amen!