

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter: "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" Pharaoh's daughter said to her: "Yes." So, the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her: "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "because" she said: "I drew him out of the water."

Exodus 2:1-10

So they said to one another: "Let us not tear it but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the Scripture says: "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing beside her, He said to His mother: "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple: "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

John 19:24-27

A mother gave her little girl a quarter and a dollar before church, "Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself," she told the girl. When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. "Well," said the little girl, "I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the quarter, so I did."

BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

1. The Gospel reading I have chosen for my message today is typically associated with the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Today however, the 11th of May and the 4th Sunday of Easter is not a Good Friday but actually the Mother's Day, the day that has been declared in 1914 by the president Woodrow Wilson as the day of recognition and celebration of all the mothers, and as a national holiday. So, why have I chosen this particular passage from the Gospel to read today? Because at the feet of the cross of Jesus we find Mary, His mother watching in pain her Son suffering His last moments of life and just about to

die as the substitution for the sins of the world, even though the world does not see nor understands what is really going on. His mother, standing at the feet of the cross agonizes with Jesus, her eyes filled with tears, her heart aching. She experiences the greatest tragedy any parent can ever experience; she witnesses her son dying. Looking down from the cross, Jesus also sees His mother and He sees Mary's heart and feels her pain. So, in this last moment of His life, with almost a last breath, He offers her the words of comfort: *"Mother, this young man that stays at the foot of the cross with you, will become from now on your son."* Then, turning to John He adds: *"John, from now on, this is your mother, take good care of her, comfort her, and be her beloved son."*

2. Some may argue that this seems to be a rather *"farfetched"* interaction and maybe even a meaningless or a hollow attempt of comfort because nobody can replace one's own child, but Jesus knows that from now on He will be no more Mary's *"human"* son. From now on He is to become who He was from the beginning. With His Resurrection Jesus' name will again become *"I AM,"* known to His people as Elohim, God Almighty, but Mary will still need a son. He also knows that for Mary He will always remain her son, even though He is ascending to Heaven, but John will remain around, taking care of Mary and all her needs here on earth. With this *"replacement"* Jesus shows how much He cares. He does not want Mary to suffer. Jesus always emphasized the importance of His love embracing all the people and on the cross He once again signifies the importance of taking care of one another. As humanity we have lost this concept in our modern society where the attitude of one's own importance is so prevalent. Taking care of one another has become indeed a lost concept, or at least a rare one. Our concept of love has devolved into the sensual form of fascination only, and all those easily broken relationships in our modern world only prove this. For many people love has been relegated to the physical sexual intimacy, which although important, is just only one façade of what the true love is all about.

3. When Jesus speaks of love He speaks of love that reveals everything to the other person, just as He revealed everything He knew about His Father to the disciples. His love is the love that allows us to learn more and more about God, revealing to us all His mighty acts directed towards us, such as God's forgiveness and our redemption. His love makes sure that we care for one another and are willing to reach out to one another and not only in the times of disaster or distress, but in everyday's life. If I focus on God's love today it is because the Bible compares God's love to the love a mother hen expresses for her chicks. When I was growing up in Poland, we celebrated Mother's Day on May 26 and one of the hymns we often sung was the one I still find very powerful: *Tell mother I'll be there, in answer to her prayer; This message, blessed Savior, to her bear! Tell mother I'll be there, Heav'n's joys with her to share; Yes, tell my darling mother I'll be there.* Mother's love has the unlimited capabilities, and here we may learn from Jesus of how unlimited His capabilities of love are. Through what He says here He indicates how important it is for us to care for our mothers even if our love for them might be just a token

of what their love is. Even in the moments of His greatest distress, Jesus takes care of Mary, making sure she will not be left alone.

4. The motherly love is one of the most mysterious connections the psychology and the medical science still tries to understand and unravel. We are constantly learning something new about the mystery of the bond existing between a mother and her baby. We know it is there, but how is it possible, we still only “try” to understand. According to the modern psychology, infants are very sensitive to the maternal behaviors and although we may begin our existence sheltered from the outside world in the mother’s womb, receiving sustenance from her as we grow yet, some research indicates what many mothers long believed, that the babies in the womb hear what is going on, on the outside, and even share their mothers emotions. Many cultures all over the world, believed that some sort of emotional network exists between a mother and her baby and in these cultures the mothers were encouraged to keep their minds and bodies clean from any impurities during pregnancy. Today, we still may see this, even in our society, with all the words of warning against certain products to be used or consumed by pregnant women. We also know, that although not all women are able to bear children it seems that the desire to be a mother nonetheless resides deep within every woman and is clearly visible in the many relationships between adopted, fostered or step children cared for by their non-biological moms.

5. As a mother, Mary experienced what every mother may face while witnessing her child’s suffering, His pain and agony. Jesus is dying, crucified, mocked, abandoned even by His closest friends. She needs encouragement and she needs support, but there seems to be none coming, therefore Jesus not only makes an attempt, but He also makes sure such encouragement, comfort and care are offered to Mary by John. In my book this shows that the love Mary had for Jesus was the true love of a mother caring for her child. At the same time I also believe that Jesus, as the Son of God, could make Mary to forget Him and in almost a “magical way” disappear from her life, but on the cross He turns to His disciple and to Mary and ties them with the bond of love that only He can offer. Love that Jesus Christ has for us has no limits. Do you remember the story of two mothers seeking king Solomon’s verdict? The true mother was willing to forsake her rights to a child in order to save her child’s life. Jesus forsakes His life for the sake of His mother and of John, as well as all of us. His is truly selfless act of the “unlimited” love and care.

6. In my research for this message I came across an interesting illustration from a few years ago. “A US-based company placed a classified ad for a “Director of Operations” position. Almost 3 million people saw the ad but only 24 people inquired. (Today, in the age of the popularity of the social media I’m sure this number would be much greater.) The interviews were conducted via webcam, where the interviewer detailed the requirements and benefits: ‘135+ hours each week. No breaks. Preferred degrees: medicine/ finance/ culinary arts. No vacations and workload increased during the holidays. No pay.’ Those who responded to this job offer scolded the interviewer with such words as ‘insane’ and ‘inhumane.’ The interviewer then shared that there are billions who currently hold this position and then

revealed it with one word: Mothers.” The true mothers are indeed the unsung heroines who quietly go with God-given responsibilities without seeking or looking for any applause. As we honor our mothers today we honor their sacrifices, their willingness to take care of all of our needs, their selflessness and at the same time we embrace their true love, one that Jesus taught all of us, even on the cross.

7. As I already indicated, some children are not raised by their biological mothers but that does not diminish in any way the bond that exists between them, or the love these “*moms*” express for their children, and the love many of these children respond with, to their “*moms*.” The love God embedded in the mother’s heart allows them to claim these children for their own. Erich Fromm profoundly said: “*The Mother-child relationship is paradoxical and, in a sense, tragic. It requires the most intense love on the mothers side, yet this very love must help the child grow away from the mother and to become fully independent.*” Jochebed, Moses mom had to give him up to save his life and although he was eventually nursed by her, Moses grew up as an adoptive son of the Pharaohs daughter. Eventually, He was reunited with his biological mother, but until his escape from Egypt, he was raised as a “*Prince of Egypt.*” Jochebed sacrifice was that of a mother who would do anything to have her child saved, while the Pharaoh’s daughter raised him as a mother that loved him. One of the pastors in his sermon I read said: “*seeing her little girl or her little boy take the bus for the first time or to enter a classroom alone, is what Jochebed must have felt and must have experienced when she placed him in the basket.*” I believe that Erich Fromm saw the same type of anguish, fear and worry Moses’ mom has experienced, when he made his statement about motherly love.

8. Jesus life was filled with love and even in the last moments of His life He practiced His true love. He cared for His own and He still cares for His own. He made sure that His mother will have someone to rely on and someone who will take care of all her needs. Looking not for one’s own good but for the good of others is what the true love is about. On a day like today, we must be very much aware that our world is moving further and further away from God and wants to replace God with the “*man-made*” obsessions and ideologies, thus abandoning alongside the one and only true love, which is God’s love, while instead simultaneously embracing human selfishness, self-centeredness, and pride. Personally, I do not want anything to do with all these human ideologies or the “*man-made*” attempts, unless they recognize God’s sovereignty and God’s superiority over any human laws and actions. Our modern society is still offered a chance to embrace God’s love and God is still waiting for our world to respond to Him. He is still willing to accept more people as His own, but as the world stands today, the “*modern, sophisticated and emancipated society,*” it only indicate that we are at the proverbial “*five minutes to midnight,*” on the equally proverbial, eternal, doomsday clock, ticking towards the end of the world.