

Fourth Sunday in Easter
Mother's Day
May 8, 2022 @ 10:00am

Homily

Good Morning and Happy Mother's Day!

The Bible has numerous passages and stories about mothers. For example, the last time I stood here we talked about Hannah – the story of a woman who after praying in desperation for a son was blessed with the birth of her son Samuel. When I think about mothers and the Bible, two very distinct stories come to mind. In some ways these stories are opposites, but I look at these stories as two sides to the same coin – strong, blessed women who exemplify motherhood.

The first, and probably most obvious to all of us, is the story of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In the passage read by Izzy, we hear Elizabeth and Mary talk about the blessings bestowed upon Mary by God. We know that Mary was carrying someone very special, the Son of God, but this passage has more meaning to it. Mary represents the strongest among us; mothers. God bestows blessings upon these individuals to bring new life into our world. These are the people God has chosen to grow a child inside of themselves, give birth, nourish the child's body and mind, and/or prepare the child to become contributing members of our larger community. Yes, you heard that correctly. I said and/or. Not all women can do all of these things, but that doesn't make them any less blessed or any less of a mother. I bet everyone in this congregation can remember a woman in their life who was not their birth mother but provided many of these things to you. An aunt, sister, grandmother, neighborhood mother, step-mother, foster mother, bonus mother, mentor, or pastor. All of these women are mothers in the truest sense and are blessings from God to us all.

The second bible story about mothers comes from a rather odd place and for some may not, at first, sound like a very positive story. This is the story of Eve in the book of Genesis. After Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent and tasted the Fruit of Knowledge, God punished them all. He made the serpent and humans enemies; he made Adam have toil hard to produce food from the ground; and for Eve he said: "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children." Is this a

punishment? Absolutely. I don't know a single woman who has given birth that wouldn't agree that childbirth is one of, if not the, most painful experiences in their life. A rewarding experience, but a painful one. I would argue that this "punishment" has also had a remarkably powerful, positive side effect. It has made women the strongest among us and, at least in my opinion, something that should be honored and respected. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the births of both of my daughters and the strength and fortitude, combined with love and caring Flannery exhibited overshadowed all the other emotions in the room.

These two stories demonstrate part of the spectrum that defines a mother and the blessings and curses that come along with it. I have been reminded of this over and over again in my life as I have been constantly surrounded by strong women. From Grammy Great who grew up in a convent and raised two children (my grandfather and his sister) to my wife and the mother of my two beautiful and talented daughters; I have witnessed the strength and compassion that makes a great mother. I witnessed the blessings bestowed on them by God on a daily basis, even and especially through their struggles. Allow me to share a couple of examples with you.

My grandmother raised four children, including a pair of twins, and had four grandchildren, two of whom she spent a significant amount of time raising while their mother worked to create a better life for them all. She taught us how to cook, encouraged us in our studies, taught us the joys of music, taught us about our heritage, taught us about our religion and God, and most importantly, taught us what it meant to be a family. My grandmother was a teacher by trade and like any teacher, knew how to make things interesting and engaging, and almost always left us wanting to learn more. Some of my fondest memories are helping her prepare a meal and learning a new trick in the kitchen, preparing for the Sunday service by practicing hymns around the piano, listening to stories about her family over dinner, but most of all the pride she exhibited when she saw us succeed. On the flip side, one of my hardest memories is watching her fade away from us while trying to hide it at the same time. She was a strong, proud woman who never wanted others, especially the youngsters, to see her suffering or in pain. It was a blessing that she couldn't remember when the time came she could no longer hide her condition, but I knew and I will always remember her strength, intelligence, and most importantly her love.

My mother raised my brother and I by herself in a community that still

believed that divorce was a four-letter word and something of which to be ashamed. We didn't live in a small town, but it was a conservative community where there were very few divorcees, never mind those with children. She struggled to provide for us, but made it work. She held down a job, went back to school, and eventually moved out of that community to an area that provided more opportunities for both her and her sons. Even then she struggled living in a community where she knew very few people, but she saw her sons blossom and grow, and that helped sustain her. As we moved on in life, we encouraged her to go back to school to finish her degree so she could pursue her passion – working with children with special needs. And she did. I will always remember the struggles, but more importantly, I will remember the love and encouragement she gave. As I watch her enter her twilight years and her struggles with health and faith, I pray that God continues to send blessings upon her so she can watch her grandchildren grow and prosper.

I could go on about other women in my life who have left a positive, motherly impact on me. My mother-in-law who has shared her wisdom and knowledge with not only me but my children. My wife who amazes me every day with what she is able to accomplish, even when she can't see it for herself. The friend who helps people who are hurting or dying find comfort at Bay State. The teacher who saw something special in me and encouraged me to achieve my dreams. The boss who fostered my talents and encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone. But I've spoken long enough. You see, two sides of the same coin. It's hard work. It's painful work. But it is a blessing to us all. Where would we be without the mothers in the world.

Let us have a moment of silence to remember ALL the mothers in our lives and ask God to bless and protect them wherever they may be.

- Kris Wiemer