

Our Mother, the Holy Spirit **John 14:15-21**

A Man Like Mom!

I have read a story. A son and his dad have a conversation. The son asks his dad, “Dad! What is a man?” The dad proudly says, “A man is someone who is responsible and cares for his family.” The son says, “Oh! Is that so? Then, I hope one day I can be a man just like mom!”

Happy Mother’s Day! Thanks to all you mothers who have made your sons want to be men like mom! It has been said, “God could not be everywhere, and therefore God made mothers” and it’s true that many of us have experienced God’s love through a Mother’s love. Thanks to all mothers who have been God’s loving hands for children.

As we celebrate Mother’s Day, I hope that we are also mindful that Mother’s Day can be a painful day for some. If Mother’s Day is a difficult day for you, please remember that Asbury UMC is your mother church that can nourish your spiritual lives and nurture you. Our God is not only our heavenly Father but also our heavenly mother who gives life to all creation.

Our Mother, the Holy Spirit

While we are familiar with the image of God, the Father, the early Christians and many Christian traditions have testified the Holy Spirit as Mother. [ppt] Can you see this painting on the screen? This painting is a medieval fresco at the chapel of St. James, in Urschalling, Germany. What do you see? A depiction of the Holy Trinity. You can see three figures standing side by side. They initially seem distinct but the bodies of the figures begin to combine as they fill the long shield-shaped section and at the end, they finally merge. One God in Three persons! A distinctive feature of this painting is that this describes the Holy Trinity as a family. There is a white-robed, white-bearded elderly man to your right, a white-robed, dark-bearded younger man to the left, and between them, a brown-robed, smooth-faced figure with long, flowing brown locks framing the face. The person in the middle seems like a woman. You can easily guess God, the Father, God, the Son and, God, the Holy Spirit. In this painting, the Holy Spirit is depicted as a mother figure.

Zinzendorf who was Bishop of the Moravian Church and had a big influence on John Wesley, argues “the name which best communicates the reality of the Spirit’s relationship to Christians is simply “Mother.” We can say our Mother, the Holy Spirit!

The Gospel of John describes the Holy Spirit as feminine. In chapter 3 of John’s gospel, Jesus spoke to Nicodemus saying, “no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” When Nicodemus didn’t get it, he said, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” We need to be born anew from the Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit is like our mother who bore us and gave birth to new life. It has been said, “a child is carried in its’ mother’s womb for nine months but a child is carried in its mother’s heart forever.” As a mother carries her child in her heart forever, the Holy Spirit, our Mother, carries us and is with us forever. In Today’s gospel reading, Jesus affirmed this. He said, God will send another companion, another Helper to be with us always. The Spirit remains with us and will be within us forever. The Holy Spirit helps us, intercedes for us and comforts us in a strange way!

Have you ever felt a strange comfort during a time of trial? About a year ago, I experienced a strange comfort and inner serenity during my dissertation defense. I have often

become anxious when I've had to go through a stressful situation like an SPRC interview or a dissertation defense. My hands get cold and my brain often shuts down. Knowing that five professors were going to ask me questions for two hours, I expected that a similar thing would happen before and during the defense. However, my mind was strangely calm even the day before. On my way to Boston, I felt strangely comforted by several phone calls and texts that I received that you were praying for me. I told Juhee. "It's strange. I am not anxious at all. In fact, I am very comfortable and my hands are warm." On that day, my hands were warm from the beginning to the end of the dissertation defense and I comfortably presented my ideas. I believe that your prayers helped and of course, the Holy Spirit interceded for me and comforted me through this intense time of trial.

Mother's Day is a day of celebrating motherhood and the love and sacrifice of mothers for their children. But at the same time, it is the day of remembering and celebrating our mother, the Holy Spirit who comforts, nurtures, intercedes for us, and helps us to grow in faith.

Mother Church

At the same time, Mother's Day is a good day to be reminded that we, as mother church, still have the important task of raising our children. I know that 98% of you have finished your task of raising children, but as a church, we still have the important responsibility of raising our Asbury children in faith as we support their faith journey. The celebration of Mother's Day was originally the celebration of Mother Church rather than the celebration of motherhood. The church nourishes Christians and helps them to mature in their faith and thus, the church is a mother to all believers. We, as the body of Christ, still have a responsibility to feed and nurture each other. If we are able to raise our youth in faith, if we help other members to rise from their despair... if we invite someone into faith and help them to grow in faith... if we nurture our pastor to grow, we are doing the work of mother.

It's been almost 20 years that I have been in the ministry. My Christian faith has grown in churches. Also I have been nurtured and matured as a pastor by many faithful people of God. For the past four years at Asbury UMC, I have grown to be a better pastor through your help and prayers. I hope that Asbury UMC continues to be a mother church of many more Christians and children.

What can you do? Some of you may feel that you don't really have anything to offer for raising children in the church or your pastor, but the most important thing you can do for your pastor, for the children of Asbury and our Asbury UMC as the mother church is pray. This is what the Holy Spirit does for us. In Romans, Apostle Paul wrote, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." (8:26-27) Like the Holy Spirit, and as our mother does for us, we can pray for each other. Simply knowing that someone is praying for you is encouraging and empowering. Let us listen to a song, "Someone is praying for you."

Remember someone is praying for you. When it seems you're all alone and your heart will break in two, your church family is still praying for you. Your mother church is praying for you. And most of all, our mother, the Holy Spirit is praying for you! All mothers in Asbury, Happy Mother's Day! Continue to be good spiritual mothers for all! Amen.