

To be a human being means not being able to see ourselves as others see us. O, we can look in the mirror or record our actions on a DVD but to be human means that we cannot see ourselves from inside the skin of another. Yet from the first moments that an infant is aware of a me and a you – from that first sensing that I am a person separate from my environment there is a searching to know who I am through what your face reveals.

For most, a mother's face is the first mirror of life. Her delight in your first smile, her concern when you are in pain, her fear when you are in danger, her gentle touch, her sharing nourishment and warmth, protection and correction – a mother is like God in the life of an infant. When there is the gift of health in a child and health and love in a mother, blessings flow. A child grows knowing she is precious, treasured. All her life she will carry the love and hope and confidence that a mother's face reflected to her.

But far too often in this world things are more complicated – a mother may not be able to pass on love she never knew. Sometimes homes are not safe, sometimes there is depression following the birth of a child, sometimes a family is without food or shelter, sometimes a child is sick and cries and a mother's exhaustion is what the child first sees – or a mother's exasperation. Sometimes there is autism or some other abnormality with a child's perceiving, sometimes a mother's drinking or drug addiction leads to chaotic care, sometimes there is a divorce that robs a mother of her peace, sometimes a mother is lax in her care, sometimes harsh in her discipline, sometimes a mother dies.

There is a verse in one of the letters of John: We love because he first loved us. On this Mother's day many of us might amend that verse by adding a letter "s" – we love because she first loved us – our mothers who taught us what it was to be loved, and to love.

But the Bible verse is talking about the love of God in Jesus Christ. We love because Christ first loved us. Christ loved you before you even were. Christ's love is not just a love for the ones born lucky but is a love for every child born. Crack babies, fetal alcohol syndrome babies, neo-Nazi families and Hassidic Jewish families. Children born in Muslim and Buddhist and atheist homes. The good news, the gospel, the word of Jesus is that God's love in

Jesus is for all, Christ died for all, was raised for all. You who already know that you are one loved by Christ have been chosen to tell and show others that they are loved by Christ as well. You are the mirror reflecting love and forgiveness to every face that stands before you. In the grocery store, on the soccer field, if we are so privileged even in neighborhoods where the faces that are before us do not look just like us.

In today's gospel reading Jesus says, "Those who love me will keep my word and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

For a baby it is enough just to be loved. But as a person grows, obeying father and mother comes from love. Listening, showing respect, learning, maturing, - all of these are part of love.

Those who love me will keep my word – for some of us listening to Jesus, showing respect to God, learning from Jesus, growing more mature in faith are like second nature. For others of us living by Jesus word is like learning a whole new language, moving to a whole new land. But Jesus wants his word for everyone who loves him.

I think of the church as those who help one another in keeping Jesus word – Jesus promises us that he and his Father will come and make their home with us.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

It is mother's day today. Some of us reflect on our own mothers this day – how God used them to bless us. Do you remember moments of joy, words like, "I am proud of you?" Or, "You are the best mom a person could ever ask for?"

Or do you remember crying out, "You are the worst mom ever?" Or hearing her say, "I am ashamed of you?"

Do you think of times when you lied, or when you were not speaking or when you gathered for a celebration or a funeral?

Do you think of praying together or a moment when curses filled the air?

Or do you think of a relationship that never was?

Or maybe you now are a mother – is your heart set on what you have given, sacrificed, received?

Is your heart troubled by what you should not have said, or what you failed to do, or a challenge your child is facing even now?

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

To every mother and every child Jesus gives this promise. His dying and rising will heal every wound, the life he has won for you and your loved ones will dry every tear. As he looks at you this day his face reflects the forgiveness of every sin, a love that treasures you more than life itself.

Keep this word of Jesus in you – Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Amen.