

John 15:9-17

For this Mother's Day I thought I'd open with a few quotes and advice from real moms –

Moms like Erma Bombeck, who said, "When my kids become wild and unruly, I use a nice, safe playpen. When they're finished, I climb out."

Here's a Pro mom tip: "If you're old enough to critique what I put in your lunch box, you're old enough to make it yourself."

One anonymous mom wrote something many of us can relate to, "It's like no one in my family appreciates that I have been up all night overthinking for them."

Another says: "My children are the reason I wake up every morning. Really early. Every single morning."

Another offers this advice, "If you're the mother of a teenager, it's important to have a dog so that someone is happy to see you when you get home."

And last but not least:

My name is mom but my full name is mom mom mom mom mom mom.

We love our moms! And a good mother is one of the best gifts we could ever have. Mothers do so much and, of course, so much of it goes unnoticed. So it is always good to celebrate mothers - and it's also important to expand, I think, what we mean by mothers – Mother's Day is a time to give thanks and honor, not just our own moms or women with kids, but those who mother us in so many different ways – in other words, those who show us what love and care looks like. Because "to mother" someone is to care for and nurture them. Having myself suffered from several pregnancy losses, however, I know that Mother's Day can be very hard for some of us, and it's important to acknowledge that struggle whether it's due to infertility or strained relationships- Mother's Day

can be challenging. But one of my dear friends in Ohio who was unable to have children began a discernment process for ministry at our church and she told me during that process, "I have finally realized that there's more than one way to be a mother." And so today I'd like to focus on that theme – not just on literal mothers- but on how all of us are called to be mothers in the sense that as Christians, we're all called to love and care for others.

Fortunately, this is exactly what our Scriptures today invite us to do – to heed the call to love others. And it is a call to love not with words, but in our actions.

John reminds us that we are all children of God – and our relationship with God in Christ reflects that of a loving parent and a child. But the love he describes is action – it is not words or feelings. And people can tell the difference.

When Kurt Cobain sang a cover of the song "Plateau" we were reminded of this truth in the sarcastic lyrics saying, "Who needs actions when you've got words?" For Jesus and John and the entire Biblical witness requires actions not words if we intend to love others.

In our Gospel reading Jesus describes what love looks like and then John expands on it - and love is an action verb every single time. To love, for the Christian then, is not about warm fuzzies, it's not about being really nice and sweet, and it's not about feelings. In fact, you can love someone without even liking them. I learned this when I was a teenager and my friends and I were giving our mothers a hard time. I'll never forget one of my friend's moms looking at her and saying, with genuine love in her eyes and voice, "Jenny, I love you – but I don't always like you." That stuck with me – it was honest and it was true and I knew then that love was not about feelings. And the Scriptures call us to love even our enemies...let alone our teens with attitude.

So love has everything to do with what the Bible calls "keeping God's commands." Listen again to John's words: "the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments." And then Jesus puts it this way, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." And of course, Jesus loved us by fulfilling the commandments himself and by healing, feeding and forgiving others – as well as dying on a cross for our sake in the ultimate loving sacrifice. Jesus also ties this kind of loving action with the love of a mother hen when he describes his own love for God's people –and he relates to a mother hen who shields her young with her wings and even puts her body in between her children and the enemy...and of course, this is exactly what Jesus did for us.

know that you are able to love others more deeply than you think you can....with God's help. Amen.

So how do we do this? How do we love like Jesus?
Love like that mother hen?

With God's help and through the power of the Holy Spirit and the support of the Church community, I believe we can do what Jesus did – we can put ourselves in the way of those that would harm our fellow children of God. When we see harm being done to others, we can act – we can stand up for them, we can use our voices on their behalf, we can find ways to protect them from people and systems and policies and dangers that threaten them-just like a good mother would do for her children. We can feed the hungry- just like a good mother feeds her hungry kiddos. We can heal others by offering them words of healing and life and restoration and forgiveness – just like a good mother would do to lift up and care for her children. And we can give sacrificially for others – we may not be called to give our lives as Jesus did – but we are called to give what we have and can - just like a good mother sacrifices for her children regularly.

As we follow God's commands and live like Jesus did – then we can fulfill the commandment to love others. God loved us first and showed us what love looks like in Jesus. Know that you, dear children of God, are more loved than you think you are. And