

Nurturing God

Happy Mother's Day! For many folks, this is a day of celebrating the love you have for Mom as she has loved you. For some of us, it is a bittersweet day when we miss our moms or deal with other emotions surrounding our mothers. Many of us have different images of their mother. Maybe you remember her in the kitchen, sewing, or going off to work. Maybe you remember her going off to work or coming home and starting dinner before she even had a chance to sit down to relax.

When I go to Southwick Village for the bi-weekly afternoon prayer, I try to put some images on their prayer copy in order to keep things

“interesting.” I also use prayers and readings from the Sunday to come.

I admitted to the gathered few that I sometimes did a trial run on them.

One of the images that I wanted to use was Mothers' Day. I finally decided on a modern translation of Mary and the infant Jesus, well at least that is what I thought it was a modern translation.

What image do you have in your memories of your own mother, stepmother, guardian, or grandmother? If those don't work maybe there is a female teacher or counselor who helped to shape you into who you

are today. I hope that every one of us has at least one positive memory to draw upon today on Mother's Day. I often think of my Aunt Anne Nesbit who never married or had her own children but was there for her 35 nieces and nephews and the over 100 "greats" and "great, greats." When her oldest sister passed away, she graciously and lovingly filled the role of "matriarch" for our family. I have my aunt Brenda in Tampa as the sole living child of my maternal grandparents. She did marry but was unable to bear children. Aunt Brenda still checks in on her nieces, nephews, the "greats" and the now "great, greats" as we have expanded to four generations again.

I would think that we have all kinds of images of mothers, fathers, and those who helped raise us. But what about our image of God? How many have seen a copy of Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam?" The famous artist depicts God as a white male, probably because he had seen other images of God in that way. We are all entitled to whatever image of God allows us to enter into a relationship with God. We are all entitled to use whatever pronouns for God that work for us on a personal level.

Though some, if not many, may call God “Father,” let us not forget how often mothers embody God’s steadfast and relentless love. We praise God for the gift of motherly love, both gentle and fierce, both strong and humble, both kind and true. Our own Sacred Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are written with images of God described as a mother. I won’t read all of these, but here are a few:

***Genesis 1:27 Women and Men created in God’s image**

“Humankind was created as God’s reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them.”

***Hosea 11:3-4 God described as a mother**

God: “Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I who took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.”

***Deuteronomy 32:18 God who gives birth**

“You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.”

***Isaiah 66:13 God as a comforting mother**

God: “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

***Psalm 131:2 God as a Mother**

“But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.”

***Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 God as a Mother Hen**

Jesus: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”

If you are so inclined and feel comfortable enough to do so, I encourage everyone to take some time this week to consider their own image of God and if you are able to, broaden that image. If it affects your relationship in a negative way, stop. If it makes you feel uncomfortable try to stick with it. I am always concerned for all of us and our relationship with God as I felt called to the ministry as an ordained person to help bring people closer to God.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells the apostles that he will not leave them orphaned and will come back for them. Our God—Father, Mother, Nurturer, Creator, Sustainer, Protector—has never left us. As long as we have God with us, we shall never be orphaned, even on those days when we feel so alone and abandoned. Later in our service, we will offer a comprehensive prayer that helps us remember all who had some role in serving as a mother or nurturer. God can be our Father, Mother, and

Nurturer, among other things. Who is God for you? I hope you will allow yourself some time in the next few weeks to think and pray about this. Amen!