

"Behold the Son" John 19:26-27 Reminiscere (Lent 2) Midweek

The text is from Saint John's Gospel, read a few moments ago: "Woman behold your son. ... Behold, your mother." Thus far the text.

In the midst of horrifying suffering and shame, Christ our dear Lord gives thought to His mother.

She is standing at the foot of the cross with John. John had at first abandoned Christ the night before, when the soldiers seized Him. Sometime later, John was at the court of the high priest, trying to find out what would happen to his Lord. Now he stood beneath the bloody, dying body of the Man who had taught him for three years, the Man he loved, and who loved him.

As for Mary, surely her sorrow was greater than that of anyone else there. No one knew Christ longer. None had the same close bond of a mother with her son. Even more, she had known for more than thirty years that this was no mere man, but the true Son of God. From the angel Gabriel's message at the Annunciation, she had been told who this was.

Yet now this most precious Son, this most holy and innocent Man, was hung before her, pierced, marked with bruises and stripes, crowned with thorns. How could any mother bear this awful catastrophe? That Mary could watch at all was a wonder, as her soul

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was pierced by the sword of sorrow prophesied by Simeon so long ago.  
Somehow, by God's grace, she endures the overwhelming agony.

In the midst of His own agony, Christ takes time for compassion.  
Even in excruciating tribulation, He sees to the needs of Mary, thus  
fulfilling the Fourth Commandment one last time before His death.

May we learn this lesson. When personal pain occupies us, may  
we not be blind to the needs of those around us. Especially, our eyes  
should notice our parents and others in authority, to willingly treat  
them with kindness and honor.

So Christ gives His mother into the hands of one who could care  
for her as He could not. Christ had lost all personal property, so He  
could give her nothing. Although all of heaven and earth is His, yet in  
His earthly life He laid no claim upon anything. He acted as if He was  
only a slave with no rights of ownership. He did not have a place to lay  
His head. Even His clothing had been taken from Him at the crucifixion.  
So He could not even give her a scrap of cloth.

He does the best He can by putting her in the care and keeping of  
John. If He had exerted His almighty power, He could have provided  
many riches and palaces and servants to wait upon her hand and foot.  
But this is not the hour for miraculous riches. This is the hour for  
shame and humiliation and weakness.

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So it is up to John. He faithfully looks after Mary from that day forward. Church tradition states that he sold his property in Galilee and bought a home in Jerusalem, where they lived for eleven years. After that they moved to Asia Minor, which we call Turkey.

This was not a short-term assignment. John did not see to her needs for a little while, and then pass her on to someone else. Faithful to our Lord's commission, he cared for her as long as it took, whatever it cost.

We might say, "We would do such things if the Lord gave us the assignment." But we should realize that our tasks are from Him. Each vocation is a gift from Him. Each person placed into our care is placed by Him.

John could easily see that caring for Mary was to serve Christ, since the Lord was surely happy with every kindness shown to His own mother. Yet we also should learn to see that what we do, even for the least, is done for Him as well.

We should also realize that Christ our dear Lord cares for us. As He saw to the needs of His mother, so He sees to ours. If He was able to look down from the Cross in His state of humiliation and make sure that she was cared for, how much more now will He look down from

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His throne of glory in His state of exaltation and take care of His beloved brothers and sisters.

Often, He commissions others to watch over us. He uses vocation so that others are His hands to aid us. He also uses His providence to see that the blessings we need for this life are available. He sends angels as well, often guarding us in unseen ways against hidden dangers.

Upon the Cross He purchased the greatest providence of all. He has created a new life not vulnerable to death. He has prepared a new heaven and earth for us where caring for one another is no hard labor. There He will serve us with tender love and devotion, so that every need will be perfectly fulfilled always.

But for now, we stand under the Cross. Pain and struggle are ours. Our Lord is not lacking sympathy, since He suffered far more and labored most mightily. He knows that we must sometimes falter in weakness, and He sends us strength for our weary souls.

Sometimes we feel that we stand alone under the Cross. We may feel that the others, who should have remained faithfully, have run off and abandoned the Lord, or at least abandoned us.

Although we may stand alone for a little while, in His time He sends others to stand with us. John has his Mary, and Mary her John.

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Each supports the other. It was not only John who cared for her. She also surely treated him as a son, since that is how Christ instructed her to regard him.

Here we also see a picture of Christ's Church. The Church cares for the needs of her ministers, as a mother does her son. The ministers, like John, care for the Church with the gracious Word that Christ has commissioned them to preach and teach in His place. Together, Church and ministers share this house of God together.

When this relationship is working as it should, then love and peace abound. When there is a dysfunctional relationship, then pain and discord may be most severe.

May the Lord give us the better part. May we serve one another as a service rendered to Christ. Then we will enjoy many years of blessing together, by His grace. Amen.