

Mothers Show us the Path to Heaven

In the Gospel for this weekend which comes from John 14: 1-12, the context is the Last Supper discourses, and Thomas and the other disciples sense something is about to change. In their conversation, Jesus says to them “where I am going you know the way.” When Thomas says to Jesus that they do not know where He is going, Jesus says if he knows Jesus, then he also knows the Father, and has seen the Father through Him.

This is one of the most common Gospels we have at funeral Masses, and when I preach on it, I’ll often make note of the fact that we come to know the way to heaven through what others do for us in showing it to us. I have not seen Jesus face to face. But I have seen Him through how others have lived their lives. Jesus in His life lived the way of love and selfless service, which, combined with a deep faith and relationship with God as He had with the Father and Spirit, are the way one finds the path to heaven.

Today, we also honor our mothers as we celebrate Mother’s Day. And from them, we learn so much about how to live out this Gospel.

For myself, I’ve been blessed with an amazing mom who has helped me to know this Gospel and so much about my faith through how she has lived her life.

I’ve seen the love she and my dad have shared through the vocation of their marriage and how they care so deeply for one another.

And I’ve also seen the countless things my mom has done, and continues to do day in and day out. Growing up, she worked hard to help me in so many ways. At our school book fair when I was in kindergarten, seeing a book that looked interesting but not really knowing how to read, she ended up getting that one (and many more that day) and working with me over the summer so I could discover the joy of reading, and we’d frequently walk to the local library together (with also a stop at a bakery, Frank’s). And as the years would go by, she’d be there to help with both homework and learning cribbage and Monopoly, to go on family trips with, to make meals and bake cookies and cakes for the family, along with so many other things that would fill out the space in this bulletin.

From her, I’ve learned so much about the faith in action.

For one, there’s the selfless love, giving and doing so much not just for me but for my sister, and our grandparents who lived nearby in North Minneapolis that she helped through the years.

There was also putting God front and center as we would faithfully go to Mass every week.

Then there was her sacrifice that I learned more about as I grew older. Mom is pretty humble, but she's an amazing artist. She loved to paint beautiful paintings on canvas in her teen years, and thought about this in college, but getting married and living the busy life of a mom, instead opted to put more energy into both working in an office job and being a full time mom, meaning she didn't have as much time for her hobby. But never once in my life have I ever heard her complain.

And then there's the patience. She was always patient as I tried to learn both academics but how to sort out my path in life. Like most all of us, I look back on certain parts of my life and wonder what I was thinking as I tried to sort everything out from my faith to vocation to having tunnel vision on this or that. But through it all, mom was patient knowing that I'd eventually figure things out.

Like my mom, and like all humans, I am truly still a work in progress. But I can honestly say that as I strive to grow in holiness, the road to heaven is easier to find because God, in His wisdom, has given me a great person to help me find the way there in my mom.

And so to all of our mothers, thank you. Thank you for getting up in the middle of the night when we were infants. Thank you for helping us to tie our shoes, to sound out the words in books, and how to write. Thank you for picking us up when we were down. Thank you for giving us the confidence and helping us to believe in ourselves when things didn't come easy, or we found out other kids could do things seemingly better than we could. Thank you for listening, and let us grow. Thank you for the incredible difficulty it took to let go as we got on the school bus for the first time, and went off to college or work. Thank you for your patience when you wondered if the stork got the wrong address and we went through mood swings and crazy times as teenagers. Thank you for your prayers, for your example in all you've done for us and so many others. For through you, no matter what life throws at us, we will know the way to follow Jesus because you've helped us to stay on that road, and illuminated it through the testament of your lives.

God bless our moms, and all of you - and have a great week.

Fr. Paul