

Stewards of Love

Today, May 8, 2022 is the Fourth Sunday of Easter in the Armenian church calendar, and also in this country, the day when we celebrate our mothers. We are a very diverse group of people in this church; in age, country of origin, politics and personalities. But there are two indisputable things we have in common. Every single person sitting here, whatever age or background, has a father in heaven who loves them, as well as a mother on earth (living or departed) who loves them. Today we recognize and celebrate our Father in Heaven and his gifts of love and life as well as our mothers on Earth for their gifts of love and life.

To go beyond the surface of today's mother's day celebrations, let's take a moment to remember a key principle of any holy day, any holiday, be they secular or sacred. When in a few weeks we celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, in a few weeks, we aren't flipping God's 'on' switch here in church and then flipping it 'off' when we are done at 12:30. God has no 'off' switch, His Spirit is always in our midst. In the same way, when we celebrate Mother's Day, we aren't honoring our mothers for one day and ignoring them for the rest. They are mothers every day and deserving of our honor. Rather, when we celebrate holidays sacred and secular, we celebrate and recognize something that is everywhere and always true but is so close to us that we tend to take it for granted. I confess to you that I do this all the time. I bought my mom a mug this year which says, "Happy Mother's day from the World's Worst Son". I forgot to mail it, but I think she knows. This is just why we need a special day of the year, Mother's day, to celebrate and honor a mother's love, because that love has surrounded us every day since birth, and therefore, is easy to take for granted. We must have a special day of the week, Kiraki-the Lord's Day, and holy days throughout the year to celebrate and honor God's love, because that love and grace has surrounded us since before we were born, until after we die, and therefore is so easy to take for granted.

But it is to our great peril if we do take for granted the love of our heavenly father and our earthly mothers. For if we do, we might forget the great lessons of love that we weren't so much taught, but more often caught from their examples. We might forget the lessons of self-sacrifice, long-suffering, mercy and compassion of the ones who have loved us most, and further forget that it is our joyful duty to share these same lessons with our children, families and friends.

So that we might not forget, let's try to recognize and celebrate these important lessons of love that our heavenly father and earthly mothers passed on to us, perhaps without us hardly even noticing. We might say that there are two stages in learning to love, whether it is a Mother's love for her children or God's love for the world. Stage #1 is to learn to receive the love given by another person. You see, we have no experience of love that is not first received...We do not love intuitively...love is a "learned behavior"...we must learn the "Art of Loving" by receiving love...by experiencing love from others. This stage is often more difficult than it sounds. Our parents aren't perfect, the world God created is not perfect. We can get hung up on the love we lacked, rather than the love we received. It can take many Mother's Days and Lord's Days to forgive what was lacking, and give thanks for all we have. So that is Stage #1 of learning to love, we receive the love of others.

But there is a Stage #2...and Stage #2 is our obligation to give to others what we have received. If our Love is fixated, if it remains at Stage #1 it will die. Love is not meant to be hoarded, but to be shared. The Dead Sea in Palestine is dead because it is landlocked. It only receives water, it never gives away what it receives. And the same is true with love. If we only receive love and never give it, our love will die! You might call this "Stewardship of Love." If you hoard it and keep it to yourself, it will surely die. But if you give it away, it will thrive!

So in this Easter Season on Mother's day, let us honor our Heavenly Father and our Earthly mothers by sharing the same self-giving love we have received from them with those around us; our kids, grandkids, godchildren and neighbors. They will then do the same things for their loved ones in turn. This is the Spirit which animates all of our holy days, the Lord's day and Mother's day, where we recognize and celebrate a love which has surrounded us for so long, and yet we must never take for granted; now and always and unto the ages of ages, amen.