

## Sermon Sixth Sunday of Easter (Mother's Day) May 9, 2010

Mother's day is always a toss up for the preacher—Do I preach on Mother's Day or do I stay faithful to the scriptures and preach from them? Also, today is an important day in the life of our parish. We say goodbye to Lu & Gary Sullivan, who have been part of the fabric of this community for as long as most can remember. So what's a preacher to do?

Well, I'm choosing to do all three. Our gospel passage this morning speaks of the peace that Jesus leaves his disciples. He is about to ascend to the Father and says, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*" What is this peace that Jesus promises and how is it different than what the world gives?

When we were in the process of adopting our first child, a friend of mine gave me some advice about parenting. She said, nothing in your life will bring you more joy or more pain than having children. She said they will lift your heart and also break your heart more than anything you will experience in life. At this point in our family with young children, they do bring that deep joy, but the 'break your heart part' probably will come much later, maybe as young teens. However, what serves as a counterbalance to the deep joy, is deep frustration at the tantrums or willful behavior they exhibit.

Mothers in the congregation know what I'm talking about. This is also the way it is with churches. There are times of deep joy at being together—times like the fun and hard work of putting on the fish fries, but there are times of deep frustration. While I haven't experienced this yet, I've begun to hear stories of the hardships and sometimes the hard feelings that the parish has experienced over the past few years. Most importantly, just like any family the parish has stayed together through both the ups and downs of community life. But staying together takes hard work. We are about to say goodbye to a special woman who has helped serve as the glue of this place and literally mothered this community through the good times and the tough times, especially these past few years.

I'm sure Lu that there have been times over the past 43 years that this place has brought you deep joy, but I'm equally sure there have been times of deep frustration and that St. James' has nearly broke your heart. To not acknowledge both is to fail to admit what it means to be a parish family. So, on this mother's Day, on behalf of the congregation I simply want to say thank you mom for bringing us to this point where we are beginning to write a new chapter in the long life of this parish community. And, I want to personally thank you for giving me the opportunity to be part of St. James'...my new parish family.

Now briefly back to my question about the Peace of God. In Philippians we read, “ *The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” **God's peace is something beyond us but also brings us deep joy,**

**and heartbreak.** God's peace comes when we relinquish our real world and our real concerns to God. As the saying goes....**Let go and let God.** Boy that's sure easy to say and so hard to do.

We all have had moments of deep peace and joy when we are really able to let something completely go and become unburdened by the concerns of the world. But God's peace can break our heart as well. When we become more open to God's presence in our lives we grow less patient with the injustices and evils in the world around us...we become more frustrated with the empty promises of the world. We find ourselves in tears at times when we hear stories where people have willfully committed acts of violence, harm or injustice toward others. Hearts of stone turn into hearts of flesh and break over what we see in the world. Our compassion spills over and we feel empathy for our brothers and sisters....in times like this pray for God's peace to come. God's peace is here for us, but not fully until that day we too ascend back to our God.

On this Mother's day as part of saying goodbye to our church mother Lu we've invited a few folks to come forward to share stories of how she has been a mother to this church family.

Tributes to Lu Sullivan: Ellen Browne, Phil Ludlow, Kathy Buck & Presentation by George Warner