

Mothering Sunday

Highampton

31st March 2019

What does '**mothering**' mean to you?

What do those who mother, do? Why?

Care is not just what **mothers** do – it's what **people** do - or don't - for one another.

- Caring is **compassionate**
- When you care enough, you **confront**
- Caring is **costly**.

Caring is compassionate

Compassion is the ability to feel *with* others – more than simply feeling *for* them. It is an act of solidarity – 'I stand with you'. We are moved by suffering and are motivated to help alleviate and prevent it. Compassion recognises that we are truly related; *we are siblings* – children of the same heavenly Parent. And that, within us all, resides an inherent loveliness or sacredness - beyond what tarnishes, is different between us, or even divides.

Compassion moves us beyond simply tolerating others to a profound appreciation of them.

Jesus' compassion means he calls himself *ben adam* – 'Son of Man'. Jesus insists, 'I am a child of humanity. I am *with* you and I am *like* you. We are cut from the same cloth; your heart and my heart are *one at their deepest level*'.

Compassion awakens a fire in us not only oriented

- towards people,

but also

- towards the world, creation, causes, animals and things.

It is an awakening that returns us to our essential goodness – to what God saw in us from our earliest beginnings.

It restores us,

and

it propels us into love-in-action, kindness, justice and mercy.

This consciousness found a home within the person of Jesus; it longs to do the same within you. (Rus Blossoples)

Sympathy and compassion are different. Sympathy responds to suffering out of sorrow and concern. Compassion responds with warmth and care.

Caring enough to Confront

We shy away from confrontation.

We boil with anger.... and don't say anything.

Or

we boil with anger.... and harm and destroy with our words.

Caring means responding with compassion and understanding rather than reacting.

'It's quite easy' said a retired general, 'to say wonderful things about love, especially between wars. It's like being a vegetarian between meals.'

Caring confrontation loves and respects the other person. And it can be risky!

Hildegard Goss-Mayr, the daughter of Kasper Mayr, the Secretary of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, an ecumenical movement promoting non-violent approaches to conflict resolution and overcoming injustice who had opposed Hitler, tells the story of when the Russian troops towards the end of the war closed in on Vienna. Even though Kasper had resisted the Nazis, he and the family dreaded the coming of the Russian soldiers.

Here was a victorious army that would take revenge, that would rape its way to the centre of the city. In the face of these expectations, my father closed the door to our house, but did not lock it.

When the Russians approached and pounded against the door with their guns, father opened it and stood before them in a way they could not have expected. He pushed aside their rifles and gestured that they should come in, as if they were invited guests.

...A soldier's attitude at such a moment is one of suspicion. He has seen six years of war and wants to survive. He is ready to shoot before he is shot.

But they saw in my father's gesture that perhaps their fear wasn't necessary. They looked in the house to see if it was a trap. It wasn't. My father could see that they were relieved. They took off their rifles. And then my father called the others up from the basement. He was able to create an atmosphere of welcome, of trust, of love, of belonging.

Far from raping the women and killing any of the occupants of the house, the soldiers were moved to share their meagre rations. They could see how thin and hungry we were – for the city had been cut off for quite some time. They shared with our family and guests from their own food. Noticing a Russian icon on our living room wall, a soldier crossed himself and prayed in front of it. Others joined him.

If my father had used a weapon, he could not have protected those in the house who might have been raped and even killed. If my father had been armed, the Russian soldiers would have been confirmed in their fears. Instead out of his inner strength and calm, he was able to affirm their humanity and take them out of the terrible way of war. Nobody is an angel and war often brings out the worst in people. Of course you never know what might happen. The soldiers might have acted violently no matter what my father did. My father's approach made it more likely to bring out the best (Forrest 2014:66).

3 Caring is costly

Caring is costly.

Ask

- Kaspar Mayr.
- A bleary-eyed parent of an unwell child who has been awake all night!
- Anyone who has a partner or parent suffering with dementia,

or

- the young school going person looking after an ailing parent.

Care means anxiety, affection, protection, cherishing, helping.

Jesus showed us how to do it. He demonstrated just how much God cares by his sacrificial self-giving on the cross.

Early Christians cared by

- sharing the Good News with others,
- worship together,
- sharing their possessions,
- distributing food to the needy,
- collecting money for those affected by the ravages of famine,
- weeping with one another, and by rejoicing together.

Jesus never once says, 'worship me!' He often says, 'follow me'.

Christianity is a lifestyle—a way of being in the world that is simple, non-violent, shared, inclusive, and loving.

By making it into a formal established religion, we avoid the demanding lifestyle. We can then be warlike, greedy, racist, selfish, and vain and still easily believe that Jesus is 'my personal Lord and Saviour.' The world has no time for such silliness anymore. (the CAC Foundation Set)

We are called to care, and to keep on caring. An improving saying that was framed and hung on the wall at my grandparents' farm said:

Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread;

'For giving is living,' the angel said.

'And must I be giving again and again?'
My peevish and pitiless answer ran.
'Oh no,' said the angel, piercing me through,
'Just give till the Master stops giving to you'.

(Unknown)

Conclusion

When first setting out to make the world, God planned to pour a holy light into everything to make it real. God prepared the vessels to contain this light. But something went wrong. The light was so bright that the vessels burst, shattering into millions of broken pieces like dishes dropped on the floor.

Our world is filled with broken fragments.

When people fight and hurt one another, they allow the world to remain shattered.

The same can also be said of people who have pantries filled with food, yet allow others to starve.

We live in a cosmic heap of broken pieces and God will not repair it alone.

God created us and gave us freedom of choice. We are free to do whatever we please with our world. We can allow things to remain broken or we can try to repair the mess. When you see something that is broken, fix it. When you find something that is lost, return it.

When you see something that needs to be done, do it. In that way you will take care of the world and repair creation. (Kushner 2002:61)

That's the real celebration of Mothering!