

MAY 13, 2007

CRIBBS NOTES

Mother's Day brings rich joy, but, too often, deep pain. We honor our mothers for giving us life, yet, there are too many people who have experienced hurt and brokenness. Mother's Day reminds us of our relationships with women who have nurtured us through difficult periods. It also conjures times of abandonment and loneliness. We cannot assume all the feelings and images that spring from the human well of memory on Mother's Day.

A few years ago, a very dear friend of mine joined our family on Mother's Day and shared our celebration. As we extolled our appreciation for our mother and grandmother, my friend became quiet and distant. Amid our enthusiasm, she felt separated and alone. Soon we discovered our intimacy with our mother was not universal. What had been so commonplace and natural for our family was not shared or known by my friend with her mother.

Shortly after Kana and I married, we talked at length about our joy and love for each other. In her wisdom, Kana cautioned me not to be too obvious or public about our feelings. She realized everyone we knew would not appreciate our open display of affection and care for each other. The excitement of love can be contagious, but it can be off-setting to persons who are without loving companionship. "We must be careful not to say or show how much we love each other," she warned.

That may be good advice on Mother's Day as well. While we honor our mothers and demonstrate our appreciation for all they have done, we must be cognizant of others around us who have had very different experiences. Such sensitivity makes it a greater challenge to express the importance of celebrating our mothers. However, negative models of relationship cannot determine what we are to do on this day. Instead, we have an opportunity to extend a compassionate example of positive maternal presence.

Mother's Day is not limited to child-bearing women. It is not an exclusive moment reserved solely for persons who are involved in parental-child transactional contact. Rather, Mother's Day is designed for intentional consciousness about life, its fragility and sensitivity. We can use this day to remember its origins that brought women together in protest against war and violence.

In that spirit, we need Mother's Day now more than ever. We need women to stand up against a military machine that inducts and recruits young people to destroy human beings and cultures. We need mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, wives, lovers, nieces, and female cousins to bond together for justice and peace. We need the feminist presence joined in solidarity against the proliferation of handguns and weapons that litter our homes and wreck havoc throughout society. Mother's Day is a time to appreciate the gift of life that comes from the Earth. Mother Earth moans in hurtful sorrow from the massive abuse that destroys her life-giving powers. Mother Earth calls to her children to protect her and preserve the natural resources she provides for our health and welfare.

In every hospital bed, in every grave, with every tear, and among all persons who suffer, there is a mother's name attached.

Mother's Day gives us just cause to speak boldly, clearly and loudly to corporate leaders and elected government officials whose policies and behaviors threaten life in its various, sacred forms. We need to listen to mothers who surround us with love. We need to feel the soothing touch of mothers who care about us. We need to respect mothers who know the path to wholeness and truth.

If this Mother's Day is to have any relevance worth our attention, then it requires something more than flowers, candy, and fine dining. We must honor our mothers by being the very best people who love God, cherish life, and offer apology and mercy to anyone who has not enjoyed a mother's kiss.

Let's make this Mother's Day meaningful. Love, forgive, and be generous without condition. And, yes, let us commit ourselves to advance justice, nonviolence, and the recovery of human compassion. I cannot think of a better gift for Mother.