

Psalm 27:10

What are we in the church to think when polls suggest that one of America's most admired mothers is the television character Marge Simpson? Are we losing touch with reality when we look to a cartoon character for motherly wisdom?

Mother's Day is not a festival in the Church Year, but it doesn't hurt, now and then, to turn our eyes toward Scripture and listen to what God has to say about Christian motherhood. We turn our attention to a portion of the Introit for today, in Psalm 27:10, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me."

"Though my father and mother forsake me." Interesting words to hear on this Mother's Day. On a day when cards are being delivered, meals are being prepared, flowers are being given—all saying "thank you" to mom for being a wonderful mother...we are reminded by these words that mothers are not only human—they are sinners. They do have the capacity to forsake their children. It may be a "political sin" to mention abortion on Mother's Day, but killing the child in the womb is the ultimate forsaking of a child—and American mothers are doing this at the rate of 4,000 per day.

Do you know the absolute dedication a mother in the animal kingdom has to her young? A grizzly bear, for example, will defend her cubs with her very life, going up even against a much larger male bear. It is part of her nature. It is who she is. It is how God made her. And that too, is how God made human mothers. God designed fathers to provide for their families. He designed mothers to nurture their children. To nurture, to protect, to love and care for—this is the nature of a mother.

Can a mother, therefore, reject her nursing child? Even though it goes against nature—how God designed us, yes, a mother can forsake her child. And we see this all too clearly. And not just with motherhood. Fathers can forsake their families. They can reject the role, the vocation to which God called them. And this too, is sadly all around us.

But we should not be surprised to see mothers and fathers going against who they are by nature; rebelling against God's creative design. For what God designs we sinners constantly challenge. God designed men to marry women—not each other. God designed marriage to be for life—not just for when times are good between husband and wife. God designed parents to lead their children—not for children to set the rules in the home.

Our sinful world, to which we belong, has turned God's design upside down. And yet, all is not lost. For the Lord will not forsake us. "He will receive me," writes the Psalmist.

I mentioned the nature of a grizzly bear mother, but do you know why she is so committed to her young? Where does this absolute dedication come from? It comes from God. Yes, God designed these mothers in this way, but more than that—the design is a reflection of who God is.

When we see a nature show where the mother fiercely defends her young against predators, we are to see in this a picture of God's nature. This is who He is. God didn't just design us for the fun of it. He designed us, His creation, to be patterned after Himself.

When the roaring lion, Satan, was seeking to devour us, God defended us with His very life—throwing Himself into the lion’s mouth. On Calvary’s cross Satan chewed Him to pieces, but we, like Barabbas, escaped unharmed.

Like the mother bird who gives food to her chicks in the nest, so our Lord feeds us—food for our stomachs, and food for our souls—the food of eternal life—Jesus’ own flesh and blood, which He lovingly and tenderly places, like a mother, into our mouths.

When a baby horse, a foal, is born, we will watch in awe as the mother mare licks her baby clean of all that bloody mess. And so our Risen Lord stands in the waters of Holy Baptism and receives our filthy soul, and carefully cleanses us till not one sinful spot remains.

“Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.” Thank God that your mother did not end your life while you were in her womb. Did your mother nurture you? Then thank God. Did your father provide for your needs? Then thank God. It was not due to luck—it was God who was receiving you through your mother and father.

When mom and dad brought you to the waters of Baptism, God was acting through them to receive you to Himself in those sacred waters. When your mother sat you on her knee and told you about Jesus, it was God teaching you through her mouth. When your mom and dad brought you to church with them; taught you to pay attention to the Word; taught you to sing the liturgy—the hymns; showed you how to pray—God was, through them, drawing you to Himself. When your mom and dad forgave you, time after time, for all the wrong things you did, God was telling you through them that He forgives you; that He will never leave you nor forsake you. Because that is who God is. It is His nature to love and cherish, to defend and protect, to serve, to give Himself for the sake of His children.

When parents act in this wonderful way, they are reflecting God who made them. And when a parent does not—when a mother forsakes her child; when a father abandons his family—this is not of God. This is sin. This is the nature of Satan. This is who he is—weak and cowardly, selfish and without any love whatsoever.

But even parents who act in such a way, God will receive. Are you a mother who feels guilty on this day?—who feels as though you are not entitled to all the praise heaped upon you? The Lord will not forsake you. He will receive you. He forgives you where you have failed as a mother.

Are you a father who has abandoned the role God gave you?—who needs forgiveness for your sins against your family? God will never abandon you. He will receive you. He forgives you.

Are you a child who feels guilty today because it takes a special observance to cause you to show love to your mother? God receives you. He forgives you. He will never take His love away from you.

Our sins may turn God’s world upside down, but Jesus makes things right again. Jesus’ forgiveness makes marriages whole again. Jesus brings families together again.

It is fitting on this Mother's Day to thank God for our mothers. And as we do so, we also thank Him that Jesus died for mothers, too; and for fathers, too; and for every child born to them.

A blessed Mother's Day, for Jesus' sake. Amen.