

## Revelation 21:9-14, 21-27

Motherhood is not a glamorous vocation. Giving birth is far from glamorous. There is nothing at all glamorous about changing dirty diapers, wiping up spills, falling into bed exhausted and being awakened an hour later by a baby's cry. But I suppose if motherhood was all glitz and glamour, there would not be a Mother's Day. There is no "Hollywood Actress Day," no "Female Olympic Athlete Day." These are glamorous things in and of themselves. There is no need to set aside a day each year to give additional honor to such people. But being a mother, sadly, can be a thankless vocation. And setting aside one day a year for them has its good points and its bad. It's good to honor mother and father. God even commands this. But a mother may go through 364 days without a word of thanks and appreciation, and one Sunday in May is supposed to make up for all that?

This is not God's way, however. He gives special honor to mothers. Choosing Mary to be the mother of the Savior is the highest honor anyone has ever received. Calling His church, the bride of Christ, the mother of all who profess to be Christian, is an honor no Mother's Day card can ever touch.

But as with all mothers, the church too, is not seen as something very glamorous. True, in our text for today the church is pictured as a radiant, glorious mother; as Jesus' bride adorned with gold, pearls, and diamonds. But this is not the church as we see it today. Today she is a thankless mother going about her work of nourishing her children with the Gospel and Sacraments of her Divine Husband.

Today the church is persecuted. She is hated by the world because she is so intolerant. She claims that she alone teaches the truth of God; that only in her Divine Husband, Jesus Christ, is salvation found. She proclaims that her true children alone worship the only true God; that all other religions are false; that "no one comes to the Father except through Jesus."

And so she is despised, and her children are despised with her. Don't kid yourself...the world does not like you. Ever since Cain killed Abel, the world has been persecuting the church of God. Jesus warns those who would follow Him: "You will be hated by all men on account of Me."

In a way there is a parallel between our mother, the church and motherhood in general. Just as the church is despised, so is motherhood. Even though mothers are honored today, it's a shallow honor at best, and hypocritical at worst. The world does not hold up motherhood, true motherhood, as something noble, honorable, and God-given. Rather, women are encouraged to set aside the raising of their children and to seek their own place in society. A woman as a successful CEO of a company is given much more status and honor than a lowly mother raising her children in the fear and love of the Lord. Mothers, if you want the world to honor you, then let someone else raise your children while you rise to the top of the social ladder. But if you want God to honor you, then be a Christian mother to your children first. Does not Jesus say, "Seek first His Kingdom...and all these things will be added unto you?"

The world's honor is a fleeting honor, but God's honor lasts forever. In Revelation 21 we see the Church Triumphant; the church as she will be for all eternity. "Come," said the angel to St. John, "and I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And what he shows him is breathtaking. Not the seven wonders of the world combined can match her glory. She is majestic, holy, beautiful, and she is honored by God. Where are those women now who rose to the top of society? Where are they who sought first their own honor and position in life, but cared not for God's Kingdom? They are not here in this picture in Revelation. This is heaven. The world has passed away and all its glory. This is heaven and "nothing unclean will ever enter it."

Here only is the bride of the Lamb; you, her children, who have been cleaned, washed in the Lamb's blood; you, dear Christian mothers and fathers, who sought first God's Kingdom, who raised your children in Christ because you belong to Him and love Him; you, dear children of your mother, the church, who have been born into God's Kingdom by your mother in Holy Baptism and nourished by your mother, the church, with her precious Word and Sacraments.

The glory that awaits you in heaven is a glory unmatched here on earth. It is a glory that will come not because we have earned it, but because of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. It will come, but now we sit here in a not so glorious church. It will come, but now we are not honored in this world. It will come, but now we struggle as mothers, fathers, and children in this life. We struggle with our own sinfulness and guilt. We struggle in striving to be loving Christian parents, but always failing. We struggle in striving to be obedient children, but not following through. We struggle with seeking first God's Kingdom. We struggle because we are sinful people, all of us.

Have you ever in reading a book, perhaps a mystery or a tense drama, taken a peak at the last chapter of the book just to make sure everything turns out okay in the end? That is what we're doing today. Today we are still living in the middle of the mystery. We are in the thickening plot of our lives and the life of the church. Today we have uncertainties, doubts, concerns. Today we struggle, and we hope that in the end everything will turn out okay.

And so to you today, the angel says, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." Come, I will give you a peak at the last chapter. Come, I will show you a picture of heaven and all its glory. And you know what? Everything is okay in the end. The church, though hated and despised now, is glorious in heaven. Christian mothers, so unappreciated today, are with the Lamb in glory in heaven. Christian fathers and Christian children, cleansed and redeemed by Christ, nourished by their mother, the church, are standing in glory with Jesus in heaven. Friend, you are there. You, sinner though you are today are, in the final chapter dwelling without sin in heaven. Why? Because of God's mercy; because Christ poured out His blood for you and over you; because your mother, the church, kept nourishing you all your life with Jesus' Gospel and Sacraments.

The Book of Revelation is the final chapter and it tells us that in the end the church is triumphant. In the end all our struggles here will be worth it. In the end only those who are holy and clean will enter the life of heaven...and that is you dear repentant sinner. You who are precious children of your mother, the church, baptized and nourished with her Holy Supper. You who are forgiven of all your sins by Jesus, and this you believe. You mothers, and fathers, and children, young and old, God's holy people, His saints, His forgiven ones in Christ Jesus. Amen.