

I would like to wish everyone a Happy Mother's Day. I know that this is a joyful day for many, while I also know that Mother's Day can stir up a lot of emotions, heartache, and pain.

Especially for those of you who have lost your mothers... or those who have lost your spouse and the one who helped bring your child into this world... Those who have endured the horrific loss of a child... For those who cannot have children. For those who have an unhealthy relationship with their mom... And for those who never knew their mom... For all of the heartache and the joy brought forth by Mother's Day, let us pray...

Mothering God, for those who are grieving this Mother's Day surround them with your comfort, peace, and love. Provide them healthy ways to grieve and opportunities to turn towards others for consolation.

We ask that you fill our hearts with your mothering love...

May we feel your divine presence, and may your divine Love continue to live among us... May there be many moments of joy, with mothers and with the mother figures in our lives... Amen...

The other week I had the opportunity to go to a Wausau Pro Musica concert.

The theme for this beautiful concert was We are Home: A Celebration of Motherhood and Family.

Each song was hand picked to honor mothers and mother figures through music, dance, and song...

Evoking powerful images of strong grandmothers, music in a mother's house, a crowded table filled with love, a lullaby, and much more...

All of which were amazing, however it was their last song that blew me out of the water, when they sang Will the Circle Be Unbroken...

And they chose an arrangement with words slightly different than the well-known version...

The chorus they sang went, will the circle be unbroken, by & by Lord by & by. There's a better way to live now, we can have it if we try...

Whereas the other version ends with there's a better home a-waiting in the sky, Lord, in the sky...

And this theological understanding of our home in the sky most likely comes from Christ's ascension...

Which we are commemorating today... And we heard in our gospel and in our reading from Acts, how Jesus ascended into heaven.

Which is something most of us are familiar with since we say it in our creeds... He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the father...

Which makes the ascension, seem to be about a physical place... Placing Jesus in some far away place, a place we can only get to through death...

But what if this is thinking about the ascension too literally?

For example, if you look at the cover of your bulletin you will see a picture from a German artist on the ascension from the 1500's.

You will notice that Jesus is ascending into heaven, and all of his disciples are looking up toward heaven...

And yet... What is eye level with all of them... Is a set of footprints left behind by Jesus...

And those footprints are not only a reminder where Jesus has been, but also where the Spirit has been...

Because this is the same Spirit that drove Jesus out into the wilderness after his baptism...

The same Spirit that carried Jesus throughout his ministry.

The same Spirit who was poured out into creation at Christ's death when they pierced his side...

The same Spirit who Jesus breathed on his disciples, and the same Spirit that is with us now.

And even though you cannot see the Holy Spirit... You can see where the Spirit has been...

Like we see on our bulletin cover, in the form of footprints that are left behind...

And we can see where the Spirit has been active in this community... The energy around children and youth ministry, adult ministry, and all the things that happen when we come together as a community.

As it is through the Holy Spirit that God is at work in the world...

And this is the way God intends to transform the world... Through the workings of the Holy Spirit and through our actions.

In the unending circle of God's very being, where God's love and grace is poured out...

Which is something we can relate to... As this is the kind of love that we know and experience from a mother's love...

As a mother's love is never ending...

And for me, being only on the receiving end of a mother's love, I know how powerful that love can be...

Sometimes it is tenacious like a mother bear... Sometimes it is gentle and soothing like the fluffiest blanket imaginable...

She's your number one cheer leader, your rock, and your safety net... Providing a source of strength for you so you can make your way into the world...

Because mothers make a way for us into the world...

They prepare us as much as possible and their love is unconditional.

They may not be able to take away scraped knees, heartaches, or pain, but they provide a way through all the of hard times simply by being there...

And even when they are not physically able to be there, a mother's love lives on in the hearts of those they loved.

An image that is portrayed in the first verse of the song will the circle be unbroken, it goes "I was singing with my sisters, I was singing with my friends and we all can sing together, 'cause the circle never ends."

And the circle never ends, because nothing can separate us from God's love, not even death...

Which is the truth we find through the ascension... The Spirit remains with us...

We are not alone... We do not do God's work alone... Because the circle never ends...

We are united in love... Love that is even deeper than a mother's love... Love that makes a way for us into the world....

Love that also may not be able to take away scraped knees, heartache, and pain... But love that is present in the midst of it all...

Love that is lived out through the Holy Spirit and through one another...

Because this is how God intends to transform the world... By making God's presence known in us and with us...

Love is what brings heaven on earth... Through the footprints of the Holy Spirit, and in the love that we have for one another...

This is how the circle never ends... Because there is a better way to live now, and we can have it if we try... Amen.