

Sermon :: 10-May-2026
Easter 6, Year A

“ the hardest part of loving
is learning to LET GO ”

A reflection from the Virgin *Mary*, the blessed Mother of Jesus.

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People always laugh ... or roll their eyes ... or *both!* ... whenever I say it ... but *really*: I was a mother just like every *other* mother who's ever raised a child. Yes, of course, I knew *certain* special things, right from the start: ¶I wasn't even yet *pregnant* before I'd heard from the angel that my Son would be a *king*, of an *eternal* kingdom; a holy child—the Son of *God* (Lk 1:32-36). ¶*Months* before I *delivered* Him, my cousin¹ Elizabeth was proclaiming Him her “Lord” ... as the Holy Spirit filled us with an understanding we could only just *begin* to grasp (1:41-45). ¶My Boy's birth was attended by an army of ethereal angels and a motley band of *very* earthy shepherds (2:13-15) ... and on His eighth day of life, Joseph and I named Him *Jesus*, just as Gabriel had instructed us (2:22).

But do you know *what?* (And I *know* you won't *believe* this!) After all that ‘preliminary’ prophecy and prologue ... soon enough, it all became fairly *typical*. He was a baby, Who needed feeding and changing, bathing and burping, rocking and cooing. Over the years, His needs *changed*, of course, but they weren't really any different from any *other* child's: a safe space to grow up in ... encouragement to question and explore ... correction when He crossed a boundary or acted unwisely ... praise when He learned a new skill or did something beautiful. And, *over* all and *through* all, *love*: love that at a midnight nightmare offers a soothing shoulder to cry on ... and at sunrise occasionally needs to bark a sharp “Come on, get up!”; love that over breakfast may feel a twinge of disappointment ... and at bedtime is amazed at how much He was capable of—what a young *man* He's become. To be a mother is to experience love in as many different ‘keys’ as there are human experiences and emotions.

Perhaps the most *difficult* ... the most *trying* ... the most *painful* ‘key’ of motherly love ... is LETTING GO: launching your child on her pathways ... giving [H]im more and more over to the world—all it has to *offer*, and all it's only too willing to *take*. As the time for LETTING GO arose in *my* Boy's life ... first, during His ‘normal’ growing-up years; and then, all *over* again, in His thirties, when He began the ministry He was born to undertake ... (for no matter *how* many birthdays they've had, our children are never too old to worry about, *are* they?) ... as my LETTING GO times came, I took great solace in the stories of women in Scripture who'd gone through something like what *I* was going through:

- *Sarah*, who LET GO of her son Isaac: agonizingly permitting her husband Abraham, in obedience to God's command, to carry off their only child, for sacrifice to the Lord upon an altar ... so, *ultimately*, Isaac could, by God's mercy, be *spared*, completely *untouched*, and go on to parent Jacob, the ‘Father’ of all Israel.²

¹ Strictly speaking, the Gospel of Luke doesn't say Elizabeth is Mary's cousin—only that they're related.

² There is both a foreshadowing and a contrasting, here: The same God Who will not allow *Abraham* to sacrifice *his* son will, in the end, sacrifice *God's own* Son, for the redemption of the world.

- *Jochebed*,³ who LET GO of her infant son Moses: after craftily concealing him from the Egyptian oppressors for three months ... setting him afloat in a water-tight basket on the Nile ... so, *ultimately*, Moses could, by God's power, *free* God's people and *lead* them to the Promised Land.
- And *Hannah*, who LET GO of her son Samuel: keeping her only child until he was weaned ... and then, honoring the vow she'd made to God that his life would be dedicated to the Lord, relinquishing him, forever, to the priest at Shiloh ... so, *ultimately*, Samuel could, by God's grace, guide Israel into its most *glorious* and *golden* age: anointing David its *king*.

*In the dedication ... through the fortitude ... from the selflessness ... of these mothers whom I grew up hearing about ... I, too, by God's grace, found the wherewithal to LET my Boy Jesus GO: ¶GO as the ragtag band of followers around Him grew and morphed into a throng of disciples ... and GO as He was ridiculed in our own synagogue as nothing more than 'just a carpenter's boy.' ¶GO as He fed thousands ... and GO as He was hounded by those who felt threatened by His open-handedness. ¶GO as He taught on mountaintops and in the Temple ... and GO as He was persecuted by nay-sayers and mocked by magistrates. ¶GO as He befriended the friendless ... cured the incurable ... loved the unlovely ... and forgave the (supposedly) 'unforgivable' ... and GO as He carried a cross to His own death—alone and abandoned. ¶GO as He was raised again from the dead, giving new hope and offering eternal life to all humanity ... and GO as He ascended into heaven—'taken' from me, for the 'final' time ... to *abide* in His forever place, while He awaits *our* arrival in *ours*, right alongside Him.*

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But here's a *secret* I've discovered about all the LETTING GO a mother has to do: It's *also GOING WITH*. Whether *we* know it or not ... *we GO WITH* our children into every season ... every relationship ... every turning-point of their lives: the lessons we've taught them ... the confidence we've given them ... the caring we've shown them ... the wisdom we've offered them. Whether our *children* know it or not ... *we GO WITH* them through ¶every journey of discovery and every taste of disappointment; ¶every celebration of success and every lament of failure; ¶every overcoming of obstacle and every succumbing to temptation; ¶every falling in love and every falling out; ¶every comfort of closeness and every pain of separation.

Yes, *we GO WITH* them in memories, *revisited* ... in knowledge, *recalled* ... in experiences, *relived*. But more deeply ... more simply ... more *assuredly* than any of *that* ... *we mothers GO WITH* our children ... *into* and *throughout* their lives ... in the connection ... in the communion ... in the oneness of *God's* love: ¶God's *creating* love that brought them into *being* ... and brought them to *us*. ¶God's *supplying* love that helped *us* find what they needed ... and will help *them* find it, too. ¶God's *affirming* love that showed *us* the beauty in them even when no one else saw it ... and will show *them* that beauty, too. ¶God's *enduring* love that saw us through the rougher patches *then* ... and will see us through whatever might separate us *now*. ¶God's *carrying* love that kept *us* going even when there seemed to be no hope ... and will keep *them* going, too.

It's *God's* love—all *God's* love ... all of *God's many* loves ... that, in the end, make the LETTING GO of motherhood just barely *bearable* ... because *in* that love, we know that when—*whenever*—however many *times*—we LET *GO* of them ... we are always also *GOING WITH* them: *GOING WITH* them, in hope ... *GOING WITH* them, in prayer ... *GOING WITH* them, in faith ... and, ultimately, *GOING WITH* them, in God.

³ She is not named until Exodus 6:20.

For the very *same* love that lets *us* LET GO of *our* children ... is the love with which *God*, like a mother,⁴ LETS GO of *us*, *God's* children ... to make *our* way in this world. And just as my Boy Jesus, like a mother, GOES *WITH us* throughout *our* lives, in *love* ... so, too, in *His* love do *we* GO WITH *our* children ... *whenever, wherever* and *however* we LET *them* GO, *too*.

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⁴ For these mother images of God, I hearken to Julian of Norwich's deep understanding of the First and Second Persons of the Godhead as both our Father and our Mother.