

Rev Rita Message May 9 2021

Erma Bombeck was an American humorist who achieved great popularity from the mid-1960's until the late 1990's with her newspaper columns about suburban home life. She wrote 15 books, most of which became bestsellers, penned over 4,000 newspaper columns, and for a time, made regular appearances on TV shows like Good Morning America. From her early twenties, she lived with a chronic kidney condition that eventually resulted in daily dialysis. She was also a breast cancer survivor.

Told by doctors that having a child was improbable, the Bombecks adopted Betsy. Erma eventually gave birth to Andrew and then to Matthew. Her insights about being a mother was grounded in practical experience.

She once wrote: "I defy any parent who has been on a trip with a child who kicked the seat for 50 miles, threw his shoes out the window, lost his pet snake in Cleveland during the five o'clock traffic, and spilled his slushie down your back to tell me she has never considered abandoning him at the next Shell station."

She also advised women contemplating marriage to spend at least one Mother's Day with their respective mother-in-law before deciding upon marriage. If a man gives his mother a gift certificate for a flu shot, dump him.

Mother's Day is an opportunity to give thanks with our thoughts, prayers, words, and, often gifts, for all those who have nurtured and cared for us by remembering birth mothers, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, aunts, grandmothers, great grandmothers, teachers, neighbors, and the women in our lives who have been a mother figure to us.

We also think about and pray for those mothers who have been hurt, disillusioned, or disappointed in their role as mother. We know that some women have been denied a long-for opportunity to be a mom. As well, we acknowledge for those whose years of mothering have been cut short by the loss of a child. We are also mindful that some people have not had a positive experience of a mother.

On this Mother's Day, I want to highlight 2 of the many mothers you will find in the Bible.

My first pick is Elizabeth found in the New Testament. She is the mother of John the Baptist and cousin to Mary the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth longed to have a child but when we meet her in the Bible, she has come to the age and stage in her life when she knew that would no

longer be possible. However, as we well know, God has a habit of surprising us. Surprise! She is gives birth to John the Baptist. Happy Mother's Day Elizabeth!

In her book Inviting God in: Scriptural Reflections and Prayers Throughout the Year, Retreat leader and writer Joyce Rupp describes Elizabeth in this way.

-Elizabeth was a wise woman, not only because of her age, but because of the way she perceived life. Her wisdom is evident in her greeting to Mary who will become the mother of Jesus. Both are pregnant and when they meet both babies kick at the same time.

-Elizabeth knew there was a deeper message for her when she felt the baby kicking in her womb. She recognized the power of Mary's visit and how faithful God was. It was a moment of awe and joy as she exclaimed how fully God was present with them.

Joyce Rupp then concludes by saying: It is easy to forget God's nearness as we rush around with many last-minute preparations. We need to slow down and catch Elizabeth's wisdom. She experienced a special moment and recognized it as an opportunity to sense God's nearness.

While reading the Joyce Rupp book, I was reminded of another mother whose bible story is a tough one to read. In the midst of all the joy of the birth of Jesus, a great tragedy takes place shortly after the Wise Men head back home.

At that time, King Herod decided to remove any possible threat of a newborn king by slaughtering all the infant males under the age of two. In Matthew's gospel, it is recorded: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children."

Joyce Rupp is spot on when she writes: "In every corner of the world today, there is a Rachel weeping for her children. These are the children who victims of abuse, drugs, neglect, hunger, disease and poverty. We cannot ignore these children if we are truly welcoming Christ in our hearts.... Let us look for ways to comfort and care for them. Let us do our part to change the systems that perpetuate unjust and painful situations for children."

Coretta Scott King was an American author, activist, civil rights leader, woman of faith, wife of Martin Luther King Jr. and mother to 4 children. Through great tragedy and tremendous losses, she lived her life committed to the teaching of Jesus and strove with her words and actions that as Jesus loved his followers that she must also find a way to love. When she was 15, white racists burned down her family's home. As a young wife with a 10 week old baby, the house she was living in was bombed. Luckily, everyone who was in the house escaped serious injury. Her husband was murdered. She often said: "Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated." She spent her life working to create a better world for all people who suffered from injustice and discrimination. Her faith kept her going. Her faith inspired others. Her faith made a positive difference in many people's lives.

Each year we set aside the second Sunday of May to celebrate mothers and the women who have mothered us and to give thanks for their love, influence, and inspiration.

Each day God asks us to set aside time to care for people... all kinds of people... family, friends, neighbors, even strangers. It may be relentlessly seeking those who need a smiling face, a kind word, a helping hand, a listening ear. It may be praying for those we know and for those we don't know. It may mean going the second mile, and the third mile, and even the fourth mile because there is a need for ongoing support. that

May our actions and words fulfil Jesus' commandment to love another. May we open our ears to hear each other's stories so that we can be a community of hope mothering each and every person with tenderness and compassion in such a way that they will know they are a treasured member of the family of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.