

Here is Your Mother. Here is Your Son.
John 19:26-27
March 4, 2015
3rd Wednesday in Lent

When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Jesus preached his most powerful sermon from the cross. The first three statements from the cross reveal an incredible love for others. Jesus said: *Father, forgiven them, for they know not what they do* (Lk 23:34). Here, Jesus was focusing on the needs of the soldiers and crowds who were ridiculing him. In the second statement, Jesus was focusing on the thief on the cross when he said to the thief: *Today, you will be with me in paradise* (Lk 23:43).

The same quality of love for another person is found in the third statement when Jesus was concentrating on the needs of his mother and John. He simply said to his mother: *Here is your son* (Jn 19:26). He said to John: *Here is your mother* (Jn 19:27). Jesus was telling both of them: Take care of each other when I am physically gone from you.

It is amazing that while Jesus was in such enormous pain, he could think of the needs and pain of others.

As a rule, someone's personality is consistent in both life and in death. Jesus was enormously compassionate during his life and he was enormously compassionate during his death.

The setting was Golgotha, the place of the skull. Those present were the enemies of Jesus: the soldiers, the Pharisees, the curious crowd, and two thieves.

Jesus' family was also there. We know there the three Marys present at the foot of the cross: Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Clopas. Also present was the sister of Jesus' mother. (Jn 19:25)

John was there, too. John is the only disciple mentioned as being with Jesus during his crucifixion.

First, let us look at Mary, then at John, and then at the words of Jesus to them.

Mary was the only person who was with Jesus from beginning to end, from birth to death. She was with Jesus throughout his whole life. There are six biblical accounts of Mary being with Jesus and witnessing a sign that Jesus was the Son of God.

Mary's first sign was when the angel Gabriel came and told her that she would be pregnant by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Savior of the world.

Mary's second sign was when she was in the temple, dedicating Jesus to God, and an old man by the name of Simeon came up to her and said: *This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too* (Lk 2:34-35).

Mary's third sign came in the Temple at Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. At that time Jesus said to her: *Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?* (Lk 2:49).

Mary's fourth sign came when Jesus did his first miracle, turning the water into wine at a wedding feast. (Jn 2:1-11)

Mary's fifth sign occurred when she and her other children came to see Jesus and someone reported to Jesus that his mother and brothers were there. Jesus replied: *Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother* (Mt 12:49-50).

Mary's sixth sign happened at the foot of the cross. This would have been the most awful and gut wrenching experience of her life, to see and experience her son's crucifixion. The nails through his wrists could have just as well gone through her wrists. The sword that pieced his side could have just as well been pushed through her side. Jesus' pain was her pain. Mary's best friends and her sister were there with her, but their love and compassion couldn't diminish the sadness and agony she was feeling.

Mary is a model of mothering. Every child needs a great mother. There is no other occupation in the world that compares to quality mothering from birth to death. I personally had such a great mother. I believe one of the greatest human gifts God ever gave to me was a fine mother.

One of the last acts of Jesus was to care for his mother by entrusting her future to his best friend, John, the faithful disciple.

You are blessed if you have a best friend, a person to whom you are closer to than any other. Jesus had such a best friend and that friend's name was John. In the fourth Gospel, we hear that John was the *disciple whom Jesus loved* (Jn 13:23, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20). That is, John was the person to whom Jesus was the closest. John was Jesus' best friend.

We also know other things about John. We know that John had a brother, James, and that they were in the fishing business. We also hear that James and John had hot tempers. They were called *the sons of thunder* (Mk 3:17) because of their thunderous tempers and personalities. In Luke 9:54, we hear that John wanted a Samaritan village destroyed by God because that village didn't react favorably to Jesus.

John also asked if he and James could be the number one and number two in the kingdom of God (Mk 10:35-37). It's a wonder that such a hot tempered person as John, who

wanted to arrange to be first in the future Kingdom of Heaven, wrote the Gospel of John – a beautiful book about the love of God. That proves Jesus works miracles and can change people. Jesus changed John from a hot tempered, I wanna be number one, into a loving person. God can work that miracle in your life as well.

So we find John at the foot of the cross. All the other disciples have run away. So, does that mean John was more courageous than all the other disciples, or does it mean that he loved Jesus more than the other disciples? I believe John was at the foot of the cross, not because he was more courageous, but because his love for Jesus was deep and authentic.

So Jesus said to his best friend, John, who was with him at the end, “take care of my mother.” John did. John tells us in his Gospel account that he took Mary into his own home and cared for her from that day on (Jn 19:27).

What can we learn from John? We learn that best friends love through thick and thin, from the highest points of life to the lowest points of life. When life is the lowest, best friends are there. In fact, you can identify your best friends by those who are with you at the worst and lowest moments of life.

In the midst of excruciating pain, Jesus was thinking of the two people who loved him most during his earthly life: his mother and John. He asked them to care for each other in the future, and they did. The two people, who loved Jesus most here on earth, took care of each other until their dying day, just as Jesus had asked them to.

What do we learn from Jesus through these words from the cross: *“Here is your son. Here is your mother?”*

First, Jesus taught us to love even when we’re dying. Jesus could have been so overwhelmed by his own pain and suffering that he wouldn’t have thought of others, but that’s not what happened. In the midst of dying, he was still thinking of others.

Suzanne and I have known several people like that - mostly cancer patients. Through the dreadful ordeal of their bodies destroying themselves, these folks have expressed great concern about the ones they would soon leave behind. They lived the example of Jesus.

Second, Jesus has taught me how to die. We learn things from many people as we walk through life. We learn how to garden, we learn how to fish, we learn how to be parents, we learn how to cook, we learn about the details of life, all from other people. That’s the way the world works.

One generation passes its knowledge onto another generation. And one important thing we learn in life is how to die. We learn how to die from our friends and loved ones. You don’t learn this from books or television. Jesus and his people today teach us how to die, how to handle our death.

Third, Jesus didn't choose the way he was going to die, it was determined by the will of his Father. There are a lot of things in life we don't have choices about and most of us don't have the choice as the way we are going to die. Sometimes the death comes suddenly; sometimes slowly; sometimes younger; sometimes older; sometimes peacefully; sometimes painfully. And most of us don't have a choice.

Neither did Jesus. It was God's mysterious design for Jesus to die on the cross. There is evil in this world and generally we can't figure out most of life. But in the midst of evil and our bewilderment, I believe that God has a design and plan for our lives. Jesus' death was the plan of God. God used evil for good. I believe that my own death will someday be part of the plan of God and God will use evil for good.

Hanging from the cross at Golgotha, with two thieves at his side and with hecklers below, Jesus was surrounded by the love of two people who loved him the most here on earth. His mother and his best friend. In his last act of compassion, Jesus focused on their needs and asked them to take care of each other in the future. They did.