

A Mother's Day Homily

John 14, 27 Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

Jesus' words are the same ones that bleed from a Mother's heart and that are whispered tenderly from a Mother's lips. Jesus speaks of His Father's love with the heart of a Mother. The Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said. Did not Jesus say He wanted to gather Jerusalem beneath His wings as a Mother hen gathers her brood beneath her wings in the Gospel of Luke? Throughout our lives, esp. in times of great trial and of intense crisis, do we harvest the fruit from the seeds of our Mother's words that were sown long ago. The seed falls to the ground, to the bottom of our hearts and die...there they take root.

There once was a young man who felt troubled and afraid before going off to the Seminary to study and hopefully become a Priest. He told his Mother about his anguish, seeking some consolation. She told him that she had waited until this day before she would tell him something she had always treasured in her heart. She told him: Son, you know, your Father always wanted to become a Priest, but he was told that he should not even try and to dismiss the idea from his mind. If he should get married, to do so somewhere else, far away from his Diocese where he was not known. Why not? asked the Son. He was born out of wedlock to a teenage Mother and his Father was a First Nations man from the surrounding community. At that time, it was considered a great shame, esp. since the family was related to many Priests and Religious that worked near the Cathedral. The story was well known. Your Father's grandparents lied to him and told him that they were his parents and that his Mother was really his Sisters in order to hide the truth from him and to keep up appearances. This was common at the time. When he went to tell different Priests that he wanted to join the Priesthood and become a missionary who worked with First Nations people and with

the poor, he was told that to keep on dreaming. He would not be respected by anyone and besides, the Bishop would reject him as he was an embarrassment to all who knew him. He was a walking scandal. He was heartbroken but not discouraged. He decided to join the Canadian Air Force and served overseas during the Second World War. He met a woman before going overseas and promised that he would marry her if he survived. While in Europe, he promised the Blessed Virgin Mary that if he survived, he would found a family and do his best to give Priestly and Religious Vocations to the Church. He visited Lourdes on his way back, after surviving the war, thanked the Mother of God and left a written petition asking for Vocations in his future family.

That's wonderful, but I do not want to become a Priest just because my Father wanted to, I must want to, and for God and for no one else. Yes, that is true, but there is more. These may be signs of God's will for you but you must choose freely. The Mother continued: When your Father returned from the war, we got married in the Cathedral church where your Father was most known, just to show them, he was not ashamed of his origins. We raised all your Brothers and Sisters until at last I knew I was carrying yet another child. I made an appointment to the see the Doctor. The Doctor said I must have been dreaming or else, I might have a cyst that needed to be removed. He proposed medication to shrink it and kill it, and, if that did not work, to perform an operation to remove it. Only your Father trusted in my judgment. I know when there is life growing in me, I said, I can feel a child moving. The Doctor took X-Rays and confirmed there was a child.

The Doctor tried to persuade your Father and I to accept a therapeutic abortion, since I was already 45 years old and was a Mother of eight children already. It would most likely be a very dangerous delivery in spite of a C-Section operation. We both refused. The Doctor phoned many times afterwards trying everything from guilt to false compassion to convince us to sign, but we refused.

I decided to spend the last days before the delivery in the hospital in case any complications arose. Doctors and nurses continued to try and convince your Father and I to sign for an abortion. One evening, I overheard nurses and a Doctor saying that they would sedate me and then they would have my implicit consent because it was a possible life-threatening situation. I pretended to take their medication and often would flush it down the toilet. They were surprised to see that I was not falling into a deep sleep as they wanted. When the time came for the delivery, and I felt the water break, I told them I would refuse all anesthetic, since I did not trust them and I wanted all my wits about me. Three times during the operation the Doctor told me: Let me take the life of this child before you die! I held fast to my decision and answered, No, if the child goes or I go, or we both go, it is God's will, so be it. I told him before, I will die trying to give life, I could not live knowing that I took that little life away to save mine. The last time he said: This is your last chance to let me terminate this pregnancy, your losing too much blood! I could see your foot coming out as the Doctor said: This is a breech birth, the cord is wrapped around the neck, the Baby is choking and will most likely be retarded anyhow. Do you want to have a handicapped child on your hands? He said this and many other ignorant things many times before. I was use to it by then. I only had the strength to say: No! and passed out shortly after, as soon as I knew the Baby was born and I could hear the first cry. The child was safe, He or she made it, I thought!

When I regained consciousness, your Father came to visit me in my room and heard the whole story. The child was brought to us, and it was a Baby Boy with brown curls and had one defect: underdeveloped lungs. He would spend the first four to five years of his life sleeping at night in an oxygenated tent in our bedroom where we could keep an eye on him, in case he had trouble breathing. We looked up a name for you in our Baby Name book and decided to choose a name that meant that you belonged to God, you were the

Lord's. We came across one we both liked that meant: belonging to the the Lord or child of God. We wondered at first if it was only a girl's name, but we knew of a Saint who was a man who bore the same name. That is why we called you: Dominic. I did not tell you this earlier because I did not want you to become a Priest out of guilt or to think, you had no choice, and that you were obliged to become a Priest. Your choice must be free; you came to the decision yourself. Now, you know, I hope it helps you go in peace, knowing that you have been chosen. Your Father always said the Lord had something special planned for you and, if he were living, he would be very proud of you. (My Father passed away when I was seven years old. I am the last child of a family of nine.)

Here I am today, at your service, because of a Mother's love and sacrifice. My Mother may forget someday who I am, and not recall the name she gave me, but she will always remember the meaning of it and that I belong to God and that she gave a Priest to the Church and to the world. How many children, destined to become Priests or Religious never saw the light of day? And were never able to be the Light of the world for souls because they joined that same Light as they were torn out of their Mother's womb? How many young men and women live in doubt, and fear and anguish, with their hearts troubled, afraid to respond to the call of the Lord? Who will speak these same words of Jesus to them so that they too, in turn, may learn that they have been chosen; for Jesus does not choose those who are able but makes able those He chooses. Thank God for the Mother of God who risked Her life to give us eternal life in Jesus and thank God for all Mothers and Fathers who risk their lives to give us life.

Psalm 22,10 and 11

Yet you drew me forth from my Mother's womb,

You made me safe at my Mother's breast.

Upon you I was thrust from the womb;

Since birth, you are my God.

This was the midday Psalm reading, the day of my Ordination, on
Good Shepherd Sunday, May 7th, 2006.

Fr. Dominic La Fleur