

Mother's Day

A Mother's Day sermon about the divine field of heavenly love that constantly radiates from the Lord.

by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, Bryn Athyn, May 11, 2025

"Who is there among you who, if their child asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?" Matthew 7:9

The Lord compares His love for us to a parent's love for their children. Children often ask for things from their parents and parents generally know how to respond to them in a way that is good for them. How much more does our Heavenly Father know how to respond?

The understanding of how to respond to children is an area that is usually seen as being a special feature of a mother's love. A mother's love, which she is miraculously given by the Lord, is the source of a kind of peace that few things in life can equal.

Since reciprocation is one of the prime laws of spiritual life (*Arcana Coelestia* 8223, 9049) the comfort and safety that mothers confer return to them in countless ways.

The Lord says: *"I will extend peace to her like a river."* Although a mother's life can be anything but peaceful, and although being ignored and unappreciated is often one of the burdens of motherhood, the Lord promises long-term rewards.

Not everyone is a mother or a parent, but the message is nevertheless universal. The point is not to be appreciated, but to appreciate, and to return whatever love we have been given. Everyone has a mother, whether in this world or the next, and everyone can understand the love that cares for and nurtures the goodness in people.

The miraculous nature of giving and receiving.

Our topic this morning is the remarkable doctrine associated with the seemingly simple idea of give and take described in our lesson. Our children ask for things, or want them, or need them, and parents provide them. In return parents experience the rewards associated with parenthood.

There is nothing complicated about the

arrangement, and it is intuitively understood by almost everyone. Parents care for children and are happy to do their part. Similarly, society as a whole cares for each one of us, all of us have a part to play, and it is a beautiful system when it works well.

We are mostly unaware, however, of the miraculous aspects of how this actually works, and we may be even less aware of what is required to make it work well.

Our lesson from True Christianity spoke of *"a divine field of heavenly love constantly radiating from the Lord."* And: *"From this heavenly field an earthly field arises. It is a field of love for babies and children. It is absolutely universal. It affects not only people but also birds and animals, including even snakes. It*

affects not only animate things but also inanimate things."

The "field" or "sphere" of love that comes from the Lord has an amazing, though invisible, effect on everything in life. It is the unseen cause behind not only reproduction and childcare, but all the progressions of life, and all the beautiful transformations that happen that are related to growth and development. Springtime is a literal manifestation of the Lord's love, and the effects of this sphere, as we see it play out each year.

The idea that flowers turn their faces to the sun, and that songbirds sing in the morning, as an actual form of praise to God, means that the real cause is a reciprocation of the Lord's love. This is an effect of this influx, reflecting the order of heaven.

This sphere is especially received by women.

The work *"Conjugal Love"* explains that this influx is especially received by women, calling it here a "conjugal atmosphere". We read:



Lord Frederick Leighton, Music Lesson

“There is a conjugal atmosphere which flows in from the Lord through heaven into each and every thing of the universe, extending even to its lowest forms... This atmosphere is received by the female sex and communicated through it to the male sex.”
Conjugal Love 222, 223

By way of explanation the passage continues:

“The male sex does not have any conjugal love inherent in it, but conjugal love is inherent only in the female sex and is transmitted to the male sex from it.” Ibid.

This by itself is a reason to honor mothers and all women on Mother’s Day. But there is another aspect to this field or atmosphere.

Choice is essential to this sphere of love.

People are not only affected by the field or by the influx of love, but can consciously choose to receive it, and pattern their life in harmony with its order. The teaching of our lesson is that this *“love constantly radiates from the Lord to all people who embrace the teaching of His church. Like little children in the world with their father and mother, these people obey the Lord, stay close to Him, and want to be nourished, that is, instructed by Him.”* In other words, we need to choose to receive it to gain its full benefit.

This kind of choice is the way that most things in life work. Our decisions affect the benefits that we receive. This is why it says: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find.”* (Matthew 7)

For example, we have a medical term called *“adherence.”* Medical science often comes up with inventions or medications that can solve problems. One is the invention of the cochlear implant, which enables people with certain types of deafness to hear normally. If you want to cry some tears of joy watch some of the many videos on YouTube of children and others as they experience hearing for the first time after getting one. Amazingly, though, despite the dramatic results of this surgery, studies show that only half of the recipients regularly wear the external part of the device that makes it work. Only half of the recipients adhere to the plan.

Another example is the issue of hypertension. About a third of all Americans have high blood pressure. Out of these only about 50 percent have it under control, despite the fact that effective medications and other solutions are inexpensive and available, and the negative ramifications of

hypertension are enormous. People don’t get the medications, and if they do they don’t take them.¹

These are examples of a lack of adherence. The solution is there but we don’t follow the directions. We don’t adhere to the treatment plan. This is one of the universal issues of healthcare – as it is in many other areas of life. It would be easy to think of many examples – from how to prevent car accidents to how to prevent heart attacks. We don’t do what we ought to do and what we know we should do. We may disagree that the treatment is safe or helpful, but most often we have no particular reason for our inaction. We are not asking.

The question is how to improve adherence.

Our community is like a mother to us.

This is where church, community, family and parents – and maybe specifically mothers – come in.

Our community exerts an enormous influence on us. That is, we pay attention to the people that we know, like, and respect, and we are willing to put considerable effort into behaving in ways that adhere to our mutually accepted standards. If everyone we know is enthusiastic about doing something – like volunteering for causes – we are likely to do it too. This is especially true over time. As *True Christianity* notes:

“If you spend time with thieves or pirates you eventually become like them.” True Christianity 120

That is, if we like pirates and spend time with them we will eventually behave the way that they behave. The same is true when we are surrounded by good people. We listen to these people if we like and agree with them. We are sensitive to any suggestion that we might not be doing things right. We like the feeling of being part of a group that we find appealing. Most of us are members of more than one group, so our community is often not clear cut. Still, we conform to the values of the community that we love, not because we have to but because we want to.

In this sense the community of people that we love, respect, and agree with leads us willingly in some direction in life. If our friends were vigilant and vocal about combatting hypertension, we would

¹ Freakonomics Radio, “Policymaking Is Not a Science — Yet” Apr 9, 2025 by Stephen J. Dubner

likely be the same way. If they care about and practice the daily reading of the Word, we are likely to do the same. They are charming and attractive to us, and we want to be connected to them.

This is how our community nurtures and protects us the way that parents, and especially mothers, do. Due to their particular reception of that field of love that goes out from the Lord mothers often have a special gift for this kind of leadership. Organizing and nurturing the daily life of a family, and encouraging their adherence to the many daily tasks and routines that children often resist, takes a special talent. That special talent, which is present differently with everyone, is something that can come only from the love that constantly radiates from the Lord and that is received especially by women. We love our mothers.

This love can work to redirect our behavior.

In the account found in *Conjugal Love* of conversations with seven angel wives in a rose garden in heaven, the wives make a surprising statement. They say:

"A chaste wife can look at her husband with a stern expression, speak to him in a sharp voice, and even be angry at him and fight with him, and yet at the same time in her heart cherish a gentle and tender love for him." *Conjugal Love* 294.6

The ability to be this way exists to some extent with everyone. Everyone knows, for example, that when a teacher disciplines a student, or parents a child, it doesn't mean that they dislike them. But the statements of these angel wives suggest that women have an ability to do this that doesn't exist with men. It may be possible for a man who loves his wife tenderly to speak to her with a sharp voice, be angry at her and fight with her, but there are no passages that excuse it like this one.

There is something similar in our relationship with our church and community. If we are out of step with the community that we love, we will soon feel it. No matter how much it values us, it will let us know in one way or another if we have crossed lines or stepped on toes. Then, depending on how much we value our membership in the group, we will adjust what we do and say – not because we are

compelled, but because we want to.

Of course, there are many situations like this where we *are* compelled, where we make changes from the fear of the loss of honor, reputation and gain. But this isn't what we celebrate on Mother's Day.

What do we celebrate on Mother's Day?

Among the great imponderables of leadership in any area of human life is the question of how to affect people's behavior. Whether we are talking about schools, families, our civil government or our nation's interactions with other countries, the question of how to get people to do what they ought to do, or what we want them to do, is always

present. The answers range from polite requests to physical restraint, and no answer will fit every situation.

What we celebrate on Mother's Day is the quality of the reception of the universal field of love that radiates from the Lord and both causes

and nurtures growth and cooperation. It is a quality of love that encourages us to actually do the things that are good for us and for others. People often call it unconditional love, but it nevertheless insists that we change our behavior to conform to what is good and true. It is the kind of love that is the answer to the common issues of adherence to the practices that promote life, health and happiness. We need to recognize, honor, and support that love.

The divine field of heavenly love that radiates from the Lord does not only affect mothers, but all people. It inspires and draws us to the kind of safety, comfort and peace that a mother's love so beautifully models. On Mother's Day we honor this remarkable love, a love from the Lord Himself.

At the same time, we honor what this commandment tells us in a broader sense, teaching us to love and respect our community, our church, and our civil government. All of these things are imperfect, yet they mostly do an adequate job of responding to our needs. But the Lord is perfect, and He is the one to be honored above all.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:11 AMEN



Readings from the Word

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." Exodus 20.12

Matthew 7:

Who is there among you who, if their child asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

¹² Therefore, whatever you want others to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Isaiah 66:

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her;
Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her;

¹¹ That you may feed and be satisfied, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

¹² For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed;
On *her* sides shall you be carried and be dandled on *her* knees.

¹³ As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

True Christianity 308:

An important idea to grasp is that a divine field of heavenly love constantly radiates from the Lord to all people who embrace the teaching of His church. Like little children in the world with their father and mother, these people obey the Lord, stay close to Him, and want to be nourished, that is, instructed by Him.

From this heavenly field an earthly field arises. It is a field of love for babies and children. It is absolutely universal. It affects not only people but also birds and animals, including even snakes. It affects not only animate things but also inanimate things. The marriage of the sun as a father and the earth as a mother produces all the growth that adorns the surface of the planet. The influence of this heavenly field on the physical world occasions the miraculous progression in plants from seed to fruit to new seeds. It also results in many types of plant that turn their faces, so to speak, toward the sun by day and bow them when the sun sets, and in flowers that open when the sun rises and close when it sets. It also induces the songbirds to sing sweetly first thing in the morning and again after they have been fed by their mother, the earth. In these ways all these creatures honor their father and their mother.

True Christianity 305:

Honoring your father and your mother in the earthly meaning, which is the literal meaning, includes honoring our parents, obeying them, being devoted to them, and thanking them for the benefits they have given us--for feeding and clothing us, introducing us into the world so that we may become civil and moral people within it, and introducing us into heaven through religious instruction. In this way our parents have cared for our prosperity in time and our happiness to eternity. They do all these things from a love they have from the Lord, whose role they have played. In a comparable sense, it also means that wards whose parents have died are to honor their guardians.

In a broader sense, this commandment means honoring our monarch and government officials because on everyone's behalf they provide in a general way the necessities that parents provide in an individual way. In the broadest sense, this commandment means loving our country because it nurtures and protects us. In fact, it is the parents themselves who need to give honor to the country and those who serve it, and to sow this habit in their children.

