

The Life of a Mother

A Family Service Talk by Rev. Michael Gladish
May 8th, 2016

OK, it's Mothers' Day, everyone, and this is our family service for the month. So we're going to be thinking about a mother's job and talking a little about the life of a mother.

In some ways one of the dumbest things a man can do is to try to explain the life of a woman. But there are two reasons why it may be useful to try: (1) the Lord Himself has explained a great many things about this in His teachings for the New Church, and so it is obviously important for us ALL to know, and (2) we men especially need to think about this so that we can support all mothers in the very important work that they do.

So, first of all, what is a mother's job? What are the things she must do?

Protect her children, nurture them (which means, feed and play with them), and teach them, especially about the Lord. Can you think of other things a mother does?

What are the special SKILLS she needs?

Listening, teaching, discipline, communication, first aid, cooking, planning, organizing...
What else? _____

And what are the special traits or qualities a mother must have?

Love, patience, determination, understanding, knowledge (about MANY things including food and health), and she must be ALERT always for dangers of all kinds.
What else? _____

And finally, what does a mother need to GIVE UP in order to be a good mom?

Sleep! Time! Self (and sometimes other careers).
Anger, resentment, impatience, CONTROL....

Once a mom, always a mom: you never stop caring for your children! Dads care, too, but most dads can pull away a little more and not worry quite so much about their children, especially when they have grown up.

So what is it about WOMEN that gives them the ability to be good mothers?

Well, first of all, women are built so that they can have babies. Even though many women don't have babies both their bodies and their minds have been shaped by the Lord for this purpose – in case they do. Let's think about this.

The New Church has many wonderful teachings about *the differences between men and women*. One of these is that women are by nature more outwardly loving than men are. In general they care more about other people's feelings and needs than men do, and it is more important to them to have good communication and good relationships with people than it is for men.

What this means is that they want to be close to others and to be able to talk about things together in a good way – much more than men, who very often would rather try to figure things out on their own.

Of course men can be very loving, too, but it's not so natural with them and not usually so obvious; this is a more internal, hidden part of men's lives and it can take a long time for some of us to learn how best to show it.

Can you see how this difference might help women be better mothers than men – especially with very young children?

Why? Can you say? _____

Another obvious difference between men and women is that women have softer, smoother skin and bodies, and it is scientifically proven that they have a much more delicate sense of touch and hearing than men do. But **men see better** than women in bright light, and they also focus more on things that are far away than women do; they even have a better sense of how far away things really are (a thing we call perspective), while women are more aware of things that are nearby and see those things more clearly, even when it's not very light.

These facts support what the Lord teaches us in the New Church about men being made especially to learn and understand abstract ideas..., while women are made to feel and perceive things that are close to them, that they can hear and touch.

Can you see how THESE differences make women better mothers than men?

How? _____

The thing is, one of the most important jobs the Lord has given men – and He has created us especially for this purpose – is to protect women so that THEY can do a good job of protecting their children. Of course both moms and dads will protect and provide for their children, but generally speaking the MOM is the one who spends the most time with a baby and takes care of that baby's basic needs, while the dad is doing other things to make sure the whole house and the neighborhood are safe. He looks ahead and so provides for the family's future, while she looks all around herself and so provides for what is needed right now.

The fact that men see better at night is also a natural reminder that men love to understand things in the bright light of truth, whereas women are usually more interested in things that have to do with love and care and being close.

By the way, men and boys are usually more competitive – more concerned with winning and losing, and who's the best, while women are more concerned about forming groups and being included. And these, too, are differences that help us understand why women are the mothers of the world. They're constantly working to keep the family together, to stop the arguments, to make sure all the children are safe and get what they need and are happy.

But now, let's think about what happens to a mother when her children grow up. Does she change and become a different kind of person? Does she stop caring and become more like a man? No, of course not! She may DO different things, now that she has time and she doesn't have to be constantly thinking about the children, but she's still the same person with all the same qualities and abilities.

She can still hear better and feel things better than a man.
 She still loves to help people co-operate together.
 She still wants to *talk about* the things that are important to her...
 And she will always, ALWAYS care for her children, no matter how old they are or where they live or what they do....

"Once a mother, always a mother," we say. And the reason it's true is because if you're a woman you will always be a woman: you will always have those special qualities that the Lord has given to women. And if you're a girl you can count on the fact that when you grow up you will have all the qualities you need to be a good mom, too. The only thing you'll have to do is learn how to USE your skills properly – which isn't easy, but can be a lot of fun.

And here's another important thing: if you're a woman and you're NOT a mother, you still have all the qualities that mothers need, you just use them in other ways no matter what sort of job you have. Because you have those instincts. You have those loves. You have that ability to hear and see and feel things in your special feminine way. So whatever you do, you can be LIKE a mother by doing it in a way that protects and provides for new life, a way that understands and makes connections with other people, a way that helps people get along....

Besides, we ALL HAVE mothers, whether they are still living in this world or not, and we can show respect for these women by learning and doing the things that they have tried to teach us.

So here's a question we asked a few years ago, and some of you responded very warmly. It will be interesting to see what you have to say this time. The question is, what did you learn from your mothers – or perhaps your aunts or grandmothers – that is most important to you today? Can you say? _____

And here's one last point for today, but it is a very important one: all through the Word the Lord calls the CHURCH a mother, and He has taught us in the heavenly doctrines that a mother is LIKE the church and so represents and reminds us of the church. What this means is that the church does – or should do – exactly the same things a mother does for her children, that is, for all the people who belong to it.

She protects and provides for them – *spiritually*;
 Feeds them and teaches them – *spiritually*;
 Gives first aid, helps people heal when they get hurt – *spiritually*;
 Communicates; talks, listens, brings people together – *spiritually*;
 Leads them and plays with them, and is very patient with them...

This does NOT mean that the ministers do all these things: that would be silly; ministers in this church are all men. But the *whole church* is like a mother and so we do these things *together*, as

one body made up of many people working with one another. Of course, the ministers can and should be leaders, and *men of all kinds* are needed to make sure the church can do its work, but in the end it's all about being a FAMILY in relation to the LORD, our heavenly Father.

And by the way, if the church is going to do its job well it will have to *give up* some of the same sorts of things a mother does:

We will have to give up time we might have spent doing other things....
We will have to try hard not to get upset about bad behavior;
We can't be mean or get angry with one another; that never helps.

And we will have to remember that we DO NOT CONTROL our members; we can only do our best to help one another.

As we celebrate Mothers' Day today let's remember to be thankful also for our spiritual mother, the Church, and for all the people in it, whether men or women, boys or girls, who can help us learn and understand and grow in ways that make us all better people – people who can go out beyond our little family and be truly useful to the whole world, helping the Lord's kingdom to come *on earth as it is in heaven*.

Amen.

Lessons: Genesis 2:18-24
 Matthew 12:46-50
 The Fourth Commandment & TCR 306:1 (below)

“In the spiritual sense, by honoring father and mother is meant venerating and loving God and the Church. In this sense, father means God, who is the Father of all, and mother means the Church. Children and angels in heaven know no other father and no other mother, since they are there born anew from the Lord by means of the Church. The Lord therefore says,

‘Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.’
Matt. 23:9.

“This was said for children and angels in heaven, but not for children and men on earth. The Lord teaches the same thing in the common prayer of the Christian Churches, "Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be thy name." In the spiritual sense, mother means the Church, because, as a mother on earth nourishes her children with natural food, so the Church nourishes her children with spiritual food. In the Word, therefore, the Church is everywhere called mother....”