

## A MOTHER'S LOVE

On this Mother's Day Weekend, we long to express gratitude for the gift of life. Growing up, I can remember all the times my mom told me no. She would say "you can't go out until you finish all of your homework." She would also tell me that I couldn't go out to a certain place. There was a curfew at our house, no matter how old we were. It took me a while to realize all of this was done out of love.

We live in unprecedented times. We are told we can't come to church, we can't go to restaurants and we have to wear a mask in public. All of these directives can seem restrictive. Yet, just like every time my mom told me "no", we are given these mandates out of love and a concern for the safety of others and ourselves. It took me a while to understand that my mom was not saying "no" so that I would have a miserable life. She was concerned at times for my safety and because at times I had not thought things out. It is because of these experiences while growing up that I find myself able to handle what is being imposed on us at this time.

Moms are given a mission by God. They are to love us and surround us with care and guidance that allow us to grow. I am grateful for all the times my mom said "no". I am sure I did not make it easy on her when she did. I could be a bit strong-willed at times. But because of her tough love, I learned limitations and courage. I learned common sense and a way to look at things differently. It would have been easier on my mom if she could have given in and said "yes". It would have been easier on her if she was just a friend to me in our conversations, yet she stayed the course and fulfilled the mission. "No" was a common word and I am thankful she used it wisely.

May God bless all moms and give them the wisdom and strength to guide their strong-willed children with love.



Father John

## JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

This Gospel passage is often proclaimed at the celebration of life as a family gathers to reflect on the gift of resurrection for a loved one at the Liturgy of Christian Burial. Those words offered by Jesus are a response to a question. Thomas says "We do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?" I think this resonates with families and loved ones. Death is an individual experience. As a people of faith we know Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. We have had years to reflect on that proclamation and our faith leads us to a conviction of what is proclaimed. On this day, at this time, we are invited to go deeper and unpack those words. When Jesus says He is the way, it is HIS way. To realize this we must visit the gateway of being a follower. His way is the Cross. His way is the washing of the feet of others. His way is the recognition of Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread and it is forgiveness won for us. When we state Jesus is the truth, we are saying He is the truth beyond all understanding. He is the sum of all truth that we can only know partially and will never know completely. His truth is a truth that the world does not totally accept, the truth of the Trinity, the truth that He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is the truth that He died for our sins. When we say Jesus is the life, we are talking about His life; a life lived for others. He is the life that conquered death itself in the resurrection. He is the life that shed His blood for the new and eternal covenant. He is the life that embraced and surrendered to the will of the heavenly Father.

In all of this lies the great paradox. In order to proclaim Jesus is the way, it must be His way and not our own. When we proclaim Jesus is the truth, it must be an entering into His truth. It must be a shedding of our own imperfect interpretations of shallow truths that can only stretch our minds so far. His truth is vaster than our very brain can handle. When we proclaim Jesus is the life, it must be His life, not our own. The great saints lived never for themselves but fought the fight to become small and humble so He could be praised. It is a lifelong quest to proclaim Jesus as the way, the truth and the life because in doing so we are admitting our own limitations. It is my prayer that as a community, we may allow His way to become the way we follow. When we proclaim His truth, may we allow our inadequate simplistic interpretations of truth to fall away and be abandoned. And when we proclaim His life, we may embrace it to the fullest reality that we can. For His life always was heading back to the heavenly Father. His life was never lived for Himself, but given as a sacrifice for our sinfulness. How can we live our life worthy of the breath God gives us? How can we embrace truth in our lives worthy of the truth God reveals in Jesus? How can we find our way in this world that is worthy of His way proclaimed in His death and resurrection? This is what it means to say Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. May we go deeper with Him.



Father John J. Ouper