

Father O'Connor's Homily for 10 May 2026  
Sixth Sunday of Easter – A  
Mother's Day  
Baccalaureate Sunday

Acts of the Apostles 8: 5-8, 14-17  
1 Peter 3: 15-18  
John 14: 15-21

Jesus said to His disciples: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.... And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Love. It is important to remember that love is not inborn. Love is a learned response. And love is something that parents – our mothers and our fathers – teach. And they teach it the only effective way that one teaches anything: by doing loving things.... leading by their example.

On this Mother's Day, we honor our mothers who carried us close to their hearts for the first nine months of our “hidden lives” before the day we were born and saw the light of day for the first time. We honor them and all those who show a vital motherly influence over others.

“Watch me,” they tell us, “and you will learn how to love. Let me help you move from inbred selfishness to loving and sharing and caring about others.” That sounds a lot like the teaching style we learn from Jesus who says, “Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other” [John 13: 34].

Or as Ann Taylor's rhyme puts it:

*Who ran to help me when I fell,  
And would some pretty story tell,  
Or kiss the place to make it well?  
My mother!*

Out of the French Revolution comes the story of a mother who had wandered through the woods for three days with her two small children, trying to survive on roots and leaves. On the third day, she heard some soldiers approaching and quickly hid herself and her children behind some bushes.

The sergeant prodded the bushes and when he saw the hungry woman and her two children he gave her a loaf of bread. The mother took the loaf eagerly and broke it in half and gave one half to each child.

“She has kept none for herself,” the sergeant said. “Because she is not hungry?” a soldier asked. “No, because she is a mother,” the sergeant replied.

Love is taught by loving actions, and our first experiences of love in this life come from our mothers. We instinctively recognize that. Have you ever noticed that the first thing that many people say when they get in front of a video camera is, “Hi, Mom!” Guess who the most important person is in their lives.

But I must add that love is taught by lots of moms and dads – even those without their own children. Like me, for instance, who am single and celibate and have more spiritual children than I could ever count. And what do you call me? “Father.”

There are many people who have taken on the sacred role of being spiritual mothers and spiritual fathers for others. Among them are: grandparents and Godparents, adoptive parents, step-parents, foster parents and guardians, teachers and coaches, aunts and uncles, those who care for mothers in need and their children born and unborn, kind neighbors and friends. For Mother’s Day and Father’s Day we really celebrate all those people who have mothered and fathered us physically, spiritually and emotionally and have taught us how to love. Such people have many, many children in the Lord.

There was a plainly-dressed couple at a graduation ceremony at a highly-acclaimed university. They were clearly out-of-place among the other stylish parents. When one graduate received his diploma he immediately left the stage and went to this couple and placed his diploma in their hands. He was so thankful for all that his mother and father had sacrificed so that he could graduate that day. He was acknowledging that his diploma really belonged to them. He was a grateful young man.

Perhaps no one captures the mood and the happy interplay between today’s Gospel and Mother’s Day like the late Erma Bombeck. She writes:

*On Mother’s Day morning all over the country, grateful moms are pushed back onto their pillows. And a strange assortment of food will be coming out of the kitchen destined to take the sight from a good eye.*

*A mixer whirls out of control, then stops abruptly as a voice cries, “I’m telling!” A dog barks and another voice says, “Get his paws out of there. Mom has to eat that!”*

*The rest is a blur of banging doors, running water, rapid footsteps and a high-pitched, “YOU started the fire! Now YOU can put it out!”*

*The breakfast is fairly standard: a water tumbler of juice, five pieces of black bacon that snap in half when you breathe on them, a mound of eggs that could feed a military division, and four pieces of cold toast.*

*The kids line up by the bed to watch you eat, and from time to time ask why you are not touching the cantaloupe with the black olives on top spelling M-O-M.*

Now comes the punch line of today's Gospel as Erma Bombeck continues:

*Later in the day, after you have decided that it would be easier to move to a new house than clean the kitchen, you settle in your quiet place where, if you are wise, you will reflect on this day.*

*Your children have given instead of received. They have offered to you the sincerest form of flattery: trying to imitate what you do for them. And they have presented you with the greatest gift that people can give: the gift of themselves.*

That is the message and the meaning of today's Gospel. Jesus said to His disciples: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.... And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

It is a perfect Gospel for Mother's Day. Why? Because mothers teach us **how to love** so well. They lead by their example. And we honor them today with our gratitude and our love.

Happy Mother's Day, everyone.