

May 10, 2020

Dear friend,

Celebrating women in church during Mother's Day was part of my spiritual and moral formation (This year, my customary manner, our customary manner, of celebrating Mother's Day in a sacred space has been impacted by the global health crisis).

To illustrate how important celebrating women at the church was on Mother's Day, let me share what we did at my home church. The youth group handed out carnations to the women at the beginning of worship. During worship, an Elder would provide us with an annual, historical sermonette pertaining to Mother's Day. This Elder would remind us that the American incarnation of Mother's Day was created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 and that Mother's Day became an official U.S. holiday in 1914. Also, we learned that celebrations of motherhood could be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, and that early Christians also had what was known as "Mothering Sunday," which fell during Lent. It was a time for the faithful (not just mothers) to return to their "mother church" for a special service.

After worship, the men's group prepared and organized a brunch comprised of roasted pork, rice mixed with pigeon peas, and a variety of salads and delectable desserts. The men's group bought the baked goods from an Italian pastry shop, but they prepared the main dishes at the church kitchen, prior to worship. No *machismo* in that church, in part because the Gospel, as taught in that church, always challenged us to invert societal conventions dealing with gender roles and patriarchal attitudes. Entertainment during brunch was provided by the church's musicians and by members of our children's group in the form of skits. From this experience I learned that Mother's Day is a big deal.

Also, I learned that "Mothering Sunday" required that I develop an expansive definition and application of what constitutes motherhood. "Mothering Sunday" helped me realize that many of us have not only been blessed by the virtues of a biological mother, but that we have also been comforted, guided, nurtured and inspired by many surrogate and spiritual mothers throughout our lives. Think about a Sunday School teacher, or a secular teacher, or a coach, or an aunt, or a girl scout leader, or a grandmother, or a male authority figure who has played the role of mothering, among other examples. If we took time to ponder, we may realize that there have been many who have "mothered" us and continue to "mother" us. Look at what we have become as a result of the sacrifices and commitments demonstrated by all who have "mothered" us.

On this sacred Sunday, where we take time to observe the contributions and legacies of our mothers on Mother's Day, may we continue to honor all who have had a mothering influence in our individual life, including the motherhood role of God as found in the Bible (See: Isaiah 66:13; **"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem)."**)

While this year I cannot celebrate Mother's Day with you at the church, I am with you in spirit, and in the words of our beloved 16th President Abraham Lincoln, I recognize that, **"All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother,"** and that, of course, includes all who have played a motherly role in my personal life and in my ministry.

Thank you! May you have a blessed Mother's Day!

Pastor Luis

P.S. Here is our worship link: <https://youtu.be/8V74hjLfx74>