

Devotion Week of May 1, 2022 – Third Week of Eastertide

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Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

John 19:25-27

This coming Sunday is Mother's Day, and I always think of this passage from John, with Mary watching her son die. The sculpture *The Pieta* by Michelangelo has always signified for me Mary's grief, as she holds her dead son. Only in John, though, is Mary clearly identified as being present, and only in this passage does Jesus entrust "the disciple whom he loved" to her and entrust Mary to him. Commentators think that this disciple is John, and there are stories throughout the Middle East and Asia Minor about John caring for Mary.

One story is that John, Mary, and Mary Magdalene traveled to Spain. Another story has them going to Ephesus, where she lived with John until her death. The ruins of a house there have been identified by the Catholic Church as her home, and it is a pilgrimage site for Christians and Muslims. A nearby spring is said to have healing powers, and miracles have been reported there.

I have been to this house in Ephesus. I don't know if Mary and John really lived there, but I love the idea that Jesus in his last hours on earth wanted to take care of both his mother and this young disciple, who he loved so much. They became a new family with his blessing.

Mothers aren't always biological parents to their children, or even adoptive or step parents. Sometimes they are engrafted into situations of love where they nurture people who need their care, or someone just decides that they need a caring woman to nurture them. I have experienced both. I have been nurtured by my elders in Presbyterian Women along my path of PW leadership, and I have attached myself to wise women in my church or community to help nurture and mentor me. I have multiple mothers, and I am thankful to God for them, because they keep me centered, they provide wise counsel, and they love me in spite of my faults. I always feel when I'm around them that they are nestling me under their wings like a mother hen.

My central aim as an adult is to become a mother like this to someone who needs that nurture. I can only hope that I can provide wisdom and love to that person like I have received from the wonderful mothers around me.

So on this Mother's Day, as we remember the mothers who raised us, let us also remember the mothers who nurtured, counseled, and guided us.

Jeanne