

An Orphan No More

John 14:15–21

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint John the fourteenth chapter verses fifteen through twenty one.

Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today. Today, our Lord says that He will not leave the disciples as us as orphans. Do you know what an orphan is? An orphan is a child that does not have a mom or dad. Maybe mom and dad love their children very much but cannot take care of the child, maybe they are not safe at home because of drugs or alcohol. Maybe mom or dad are not around to help the other. Maybe mom and dad do not really love them at all and give them up for adoption as a way of getting out of the responsibility. It is a sad situation. Many moms and dads will give up their children for adoption. They will give them to moms and dads who are able to take care of them and love them as though they were their own. Moms and dads who will call them their own or make a fuss over them or make sacrifices for them or share with them their values or help them shape a future or multiply their joys, divide their sorrows, or give them hope. How does Jesus love us as much as moms and dads? Ponder that question as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Adopted to Be God's Children

Spiritually, we all begin as orphans. In one sense it is no fault of our own. From the moment we are conceived, we are sinners. Sin makes us orphans, separated from God. As orphans we will need to fend for ourselves. There is no one to call us their own, no one to fuss over us, no one to sacrifice for us, no one to share with us their values, no one to help shape us for the future, no one to multiply our joys, no one to divide our sorrows, no one to give us hope. That's what sin does.

But the very good news for us this day is that we are orphans no more. Our Lord claims us as His own. For most of us, that happened through the waters of Baptism. That is when he put his mark on us, the sign of the cross on our foreheads and hearts to mark us as those redeemed by Christ the Crucified, when He declared that we would be His very own, His heirs, the ones for whom He would sacrifice His very life. We were the ones who would receive His values and be given a future with Him forever. Our joys he would multiply and our sorrows he would divide. He would give us hope!

The Cost of Adoption

He did this at great cost. Adoption is hardly ever inexpensive; it costs, and it costs much. A private adoption can cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$45,000. For our Christ to adopt us he had to give much more than mere money. He literally gave the shirt off His back. So that we might bear His name, He emptied Himself, laid aside His glory. Taking on the form of a servant, being born in human likeness, Jesus bleeds suffers, and dies to make you His very own. It is a wonderful thing for us to be adopted by him. We are His heirs. What He has and who He is He joyfully declares is ours!

Touched by a Mother's Love

One of the most powerful, most dramatic, most tender ways in which our Lord communicates that we are adopted, that we are orphans no more, that we are His heirs, is through mothers. I was blessed with such a mother; perhaps you also were. If so, you know what I mean. From the very outset, a mother assured us that there was one God who had created us, one God who loved us with steadfast love, one God who gave us saving and sustaining faith. Throughout our lives, whatever else we learn and experience, above all may we know God's great love for us.

We who have been blessed by such mothers have wonderful stories to tell about their examples and about their resolve that we did not follow a god that had no redeeming value. They were never hesitant to tell us about their faith, and they did so with gentleness and sacrifice.

There are many reasons for honoring mothers this day, but the best reasons are for those who helped bring us to the assurance that we are

orphans no more. If you have a chance to tell your mom that on this Mother's Day, do it. Don't wait. But I expect that my encouragement is unnecessary. You know its value, and you probably tell them on many other days besides Mother's Day. You say such things as, "Thanks for assuring me that I am an orphan no more, that I rejoice in God's love because of your encouragement, that I treasure my relationship with him, that my full and final hope is in him."

If you are a mom, I know you will treasure all the expressions of love that will be given to you. Enjoy them. Your children will say a lot of nice things in a flattering way, but treasure most of all those evidences you have in the lives of your children that they have heard your gentle encouragement that they are orphans no more, that they know the one true God and cherish their relationship with him, that they know the heritage that is theirs. It is an answer to their prayers.

Some mothers (and fathers) have done their best to teach their children about the God who wishes to declare them orphans no more, but their children have rejected the teaching and the modeling. Parents, keep praying and keep modeling. There was a wonderful example of that in *The Lutheran Witness* some time ago. A mother kept praying for her son, Gus, who not only rejected the Christian faith, but also ridiculed it with his lifestyle and teaching—only to come to understand the wonderful comfort that comes from our Lord's assurance that he was an orphan no more. He became one of the great early fathers of the Christian church—St. Augustine.

With great regret we know that not all mothers will have that kind of conversation this day. Some will not hear from their children at all. Some mothers will have taught their children about many gods—the gods of athletics or music or the arts or of being self-serving and even have modeled following after those gods. The urgency of this day is to make sure that as many orphans as possible may come to understand that they are orphans no more. For those mothers and fathers and children whose gods have taken priority in their lives, the good news is that God still wants to embrace them, still will receive them into his family, still will forgive them, still wishes to declare that they are orphans no more!

There are a great many who feel orphaned yet in our world. They don't know about the God who would claim them as his own children, which is reflected in the way they behave. They follow all sorts of gods—they are very religious, they sacrifice much for these gods, but they have no hope within them. They follow empty gods. They remain orphans.

But by the grace of our God, by his great sacrificial love, he wishes to say to them what he declares to us. I wish to fuss over you. I have sacrificed for you. I wish to share with you my values. I wish to multiply your joys. I wish to divide your sorrows. I wish to give you hope. He declares that we are his—his love for us is steadfast and sure, for we are orphans no more because Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.