

Who else thinks it's ironic that we have a Gospel reading all about "the Father"—on Mother's Day?

Well—actually, the word we translate as "Father" —is from the Hebrew word *Abba*. We have always been taught it's a very tender word, used by small children for their father's—roughly translated as Papa.

That's the Hebrew word. Most scholars, however, believe Jesus- and the 12—spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew—and the Aramaic equivalent of *Abba* is *Abwoom*. They sound kind of alike, don't they?

But the translation of the word is quite different. While the informal word *Abba* means "*Papa*", the informal word *Abwoom* isn't gender specific. It is also a word used by children and people very close to their parents, - - but the word includes both male and female parents. There is no English equivalent. "Parent" doesn't even come close. It's too *formal*, it's not as-- affectionate.

So when we hear "My father's house has many rooms" – knowing that Jesus said My *Abwoom*'s house has many rooms--- I'll take the liberty of bringing the feminine into this discussion. After all—it's Mother's Day. Happy Mother's Day.

And today I want to talk about HAVING a mother, not so much BEING a mother.

This has been a hard year for all our mothers. My mother is being sequestered at her senior apartment complex. It's for her own safety—but it's hard to only be able to talk to her—to see her—through the glass of the dining room window in her Complex. The closest we come to touch is when each of us put our hands on the glass. It's not enough.

I remember my mother as being the heart of our home. She cooked for all of us—even though she—like me—hated cooking. She taught all of us what we would need to know to make lives for ourselves—how to fix a simple meal, clean (now THAT memory isn't so pleasant—as we

feverishly cleaned every Sunday after church. but before my dad's mom came—with her white gloves and whispered judgements about the state of the house. But mom also taught us how to do laundry—even my brother learned. I'm sure his wife was thrilled when she married him. He had SKILLS.

My mom didn't have much privacy in our tiny 900sf house with 3 kids. When she got ready for bed each night, she probably looked forward to a bit of private reading time before she fell asleep. But it wasn't to be. I would show up, sit at the foot of her bed, and we would talk. About everything. And she never once said, "please go away, love, I need some alone time." Not once.

In our house there were several rooms—some were filled with eating and laughing and debating and entertaining.

Some were filled with anguish—tears and tantrums, hurt feelings and chewed up curtains. Not me, the dog.

Some were places of rest, of discovery, of books and bonds of love.

Some were for gathering together with friends of all color, classes, and orientations. Before that was a safe thing to do.

Our house was a place where we were always welcomed, encouraged and comforted when things didn't go as we expected them too.

My mom was—and is-- a defender of her children, someone who sometimes made mistakes, but someone of amazing acceptance of what is thrown at her. She taught me how to love without reserve.

And I tried to pass that on to my daughter.

How can God be any less than all our mothers.

Most of you know by now that I'm not a fan of "gendering" God—as if that was the most important thing. That's because I think of God as all genders, and none of them.

In the book of Genesis it says, *“God created human beings in God’s own image, male and female, God created them.”* So God is both Male and Female.

Jesus tells his disciples this morning: “I go to prepare a room for you.” This sort of hospitality in the first century was a woman’s job. That Jesus’—breaking norms again!

Jesus goes on to say, “No one can get to the Father except through me.” This reminds me of my mothers saying, “You won’t get that unless it’s over my dead body.”

No one can get to Abwoom, except through me—

This statement has been used by some Christians to justify their feelings that only Christians can get to heaven, only Christians go to God. But I don’t believe that’s what Jesus means.

Maybe Jesus is merely describing what must actually happen: Everyone needs understand the love Jesus models and asks of us—in order to get to God. There is no other way, no other philosophy, no other life view. Everyone must learn to love all people—like Jesus did--to get to God.

And that love Jesus came to teach us—is very like the love my mom taught me:

Play nicely with others. Love yourself. You can do anything—if you want to. Sing in Church. Be yourself. Listen and learn. Love everyone. And above all else—remember that you are loved—no matter what you do, no matter how you look, and no matter what.

There’s a lot of “God-ness” in those lessons. In that kind of love.

Happy Mother’s Day.

Amen.