

May 12, 2024

“We Share Christ”

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Introduction.

For the week of Sunday, May 12: May 12 is the birthday of Florence Nightingale; she was an English social reformer, statistician, and the founder of modern nursing.

Born in 1820 into a privileged English family, Florence Nightingale's journey to becoming a pioneer in nursing was not a straightforward one. As a young woman, she penned a letter to a friend, expressing her desire to serve God without seeking personal recognition. This led her to a Lutheran religious community in Germany, where she spent four months undergoing medical training after witnessing the compassionate care provided by the deaconesses to the sick and destitute.

During the Crimean War, Nightingale and her team reduced a British military hospital's death rate from 42 percent to 2 percent, mostly by introducing sanitary reforms. Insisting that patients require personal care, she roamed the hallways at night with a lantern, speaking with the wounded and eventually becoming known as the “Lady with the Lamp.” Her mathematical skill was equally illuminating. She was an excellent statistician and created groundbreaking diagrams to help explain the spread of contagious diseases.

Florence Nightingale represents a model of compassion, giving, and serving. Actions and character that remind us of our mothers and connect our hearts to Jesus' model.

Since we all honor and remember our mother, this may be a fitting week to reflect on how mothering can help us understand God's love for us. Many of us can say that a mother's love protects and, at the same time, empowers her children to live and act, to dive into the world and

take part in its restoration. Likewise, as her children grow and mature, a mother may step back in one sense - and at the same time abide intimately with them in spirit as they go.

In many parts of the Scripture, we learn God has shown his person and character as a mother. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen (Luke 13:34), depicting God's care and divine sustenance with protection and undeniable love.

Like many, I can say that I have seen Christ and God's face through my mother.

Can we find any other transformative and powerful demonstration of love than sharing the presence and character of Christ? How many of us believe that God can manifest his presence and power through our lives?

Context Matters.

This is the seventh of the seven weeks of Eastertide, a period of celebration and reflection in the Christian calendar that follows Easter Sunday. It's a golden opportunity to explore Jesus' teachings about living in intimacy with God.

SALT Bible commentary states that John 17 is Jesus' prayer that concludes his "farewell discourse" (As we have learned in the past Sundays) (John 14-17), a moment of urgent pastoral care where he assures his distraught disciples that his departure does not mean abandonment. This prayer, a testament of his love and care, continues and culminates in a reassurance: Jesus seamlessly transitions from addressing his companions to addressing God, praying for the protection and sanctification of his disciples, offering them words of comfort and strength. A pivotal aspect of this passage is Jesus' inclusive prayer, extending not only to the disciples present with him but to all those "who will believe in me through their word"—that is, the continuous generations of disciples, including each one of us in today's church.

How it feels that Jesus is praying for you and me since the beginning!

Pastoral reflection, conclusion, and application

Every departure is a heart-wrenching experience, especially when it involves those who have enriched our lives beyond measure. Consider the disciples, who were about to bid farewell to their teacher, their rabbi, their beacon of hope- Jesus. The departure of their beloved friend, who embodied the aspirations and yearnings of their people, was a profound loss.

Christian author and commentator Mathew Myer suggests that *many founders of movements, companies, or political parties often stay around as long as they can, sometimes even past their prime. However, the gospels indicate that the risen Jesus, who could have remained indefinitely, chose to depart. This departure signifies the type of movement he envisioned: a community not merely admiring him, but actively present in the world, continuing his work of healing, justice, and proclaiming the dawn of God's joyous Jubilee.*

My mother is no longer with us physically; however, I can feel her presence, teachings, wonderful talents, amazing personality, and love, as long as I live here on earth, her memory will never disappear.

Florence Nightingale's work and amazing service still impact generations of people who serve and give through thousands of nurses worldwide. Her work and inspiration are greater than her physical absence.

The presence and ministry of Christ are meant to invite and empower the church to share God's presence and demonstrate God's love to everyone. Jesus' physical presence is no longer on our planet; however, we are God's presence on earth through the Holy Spirit. Dear siblings in Christ, let's live out that reality and share Christ with all! Amen!