

Good morning to each of you,

We all have those mornings where we just want to turn off the alarm and roll back over to get more sleep. I **especially** wanted to do that today since I knew I was going to have to stand in front of all of you and deliver this homily. I apologize now because this is totally outside my comfort zone. Anyway, I would guess that I'm not the only youth that strongly desires to hit the snooze button. Well, I know that my brothers and I have all had tried it a time or two, even on a Sunday morning. We don't get by with it because my parents know the importance of going to church and learning about our faith. They always manage to get us to crawl out of bed, get dressed, and get to church. They have done this in order to teach us that God's love for us is so immense that he gave his only son as a sacrifice for us. In this way we learn that, although we sometimes see it as a sacrifice, we **NEED** to get up out of bed, get to church, and show our love of God and all the blessings in our lives.

Can you imagine the love God has for his children? Although I have a hard time imagining this, I am confident that a mom would have a pretty good idea. A father can definitely grasp God's love for his children as well; however, it is quite appropriate on this Mother's Day to acknowledge the bond that a mother has with her children, young or old. This bond is unbreakable, unstoppable and never ending. Mothers love their children unconditionally. A mother will do whatever it takes to keep her child safe, healthy, and happy. I know firsthand how much a mother will sacrifice; even suffer, to ensure that her kids receive what is best for them. That might be the giving of time and attention or even discipline and guidance. My Mom talks about how after her dad died, her mom, my Meme, had to get a job at Simon's shoes to provide for the two of them. She has always told us how Meme would do without things she wanted so mom could take dance lessons or get a bike. My mom is also an example of the love that God and Jesus want us to have for each other. I can't tell you how many countless hours my mom has spent driving my brothers and me to soccer games and tournaments all over, from Henderson to Kansas City and lots of places in between. She did all of this because of the love she has for us. She knew how much we enjoyed the sport of soccer and how happy it made us. A mother is happy and content with her life when she sees that the ones she loves and cares about are happy. That's exactly how my mom is and that's why a mother is good example of the love that God is teaching us.

A mother also hurts when her child hurts. I know this because my mom has said this many times. When my brothers and I were bullied at school about being short, she knew we were hurting. It hurt her too. I think that moms are a great example of the kind of love that God has for each of us and the kind of love that God wants us to have for one another.

Although it's Mother's Day, it's not just mothers, or my mom in particular, that provide an example of God's love for me and all of his children. All of my family, from my grandmothers and my grandfather to aunts, uncles, cousins, and even my brothers, show me God's love. It also includes many of you, my extended St. Paul's church family and friends. When I walk into church in the morning, I am always surprised and happy with the greetings that welcome me for the day. It has always been like that. Our church members make you feel welcomed, like you are wanted, even needed to be here. My youngest brother, Rad, couldn't wait to acolyte because so

many people would brag on Reade and me, telling us what a good job we did each time we were up at the altar. That makes my brothers and I feel very proud. We feel loved and needed, and you all do that. Charlie Crabtree always tells me what a wonderful family I have and makes a point to also tell my mom, Aunt Shelly and Meme every time he sees us. The late Bob Soaper took the time outside of church to teach me about flag etiquette for cub scouts. It goes without saying that Leslie Newman makes all of the youth, past and present, feel valued and loved. She knows each of us personally and takes a real interest in our lives. She listens to us and learns about our goals and dreams. Father Rich is another such example of God's love. My friends are absolutely amazed that my priest actually comes to our soccer games or school ceremonies to celebrate our accomplishments. Saints Paul's parishioners have helped all of the youth. Your attention and encouragement have helped shape me into the person I am today.

In the Gospel, John writes about Jesus talking to his Disciples. Jesus said to them, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." He also tells them that he appoints them "to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." When I hear this, to me it means that God wants us to love one another and that bearing fruit, fruit that will last, means that he wants us to carry on the teaching that Jesus has passed on to us. If we obey God's commandments and show our love to others like God shows to us, then it is forever passed forward.

As I finish today, I want to thank all of the mothers that unconditionally love your children and show them God's love. (Happy Mother's Day too!) And to each of you that has ever supported me or any of our youth, I hope you realize your words and actions teach God's love and together you all "bear fruit", fruit that will last forever.