

In so many ways  
today,  
Good Friday,  
is about family.

As families often do as we draw close to the time of death,  
Jesus' family of origin  
joined a few lingering disciples  
his spiritual family,  
at the foot of the Cross  
on Golgotha  
for that dark Passover afternoon.

These folk supported each other,  
they wept together,  
they surrounded the dying Jesus  
with their love and prayers.

Especially important  
is this brief exchange in John's passion gospel.

**"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."**

A dying son commits his mother  
to a young friend's loving care.

Every Good Friday I think back to my own mother's death in 1987.  
In truth,  
her death was not like the crowded scene at Golgotha.

My mom died alone at home,  
On a sunny mid morning the day after Labor Day,  
sitting in her favorite wingback chair,  
killed by a massive heart attack.

My father was 70 miles away at work,  
I was 600 miles away at Luther Seminary.

What I remember most is not the circumstances of my mom's death,  
but the two funerals that followed-  
One near their lake home and part time residence,  
where she had died.  
The other closer to our family home in Dallas.

At both funerals  
the presence of Christ was made real,  
to me,  
to my dad  
and to the rest of my family,  
through tears and sharing,  
and hearing once again,  
how very much my mom was loved  
by the hundreds who gathered  
in each place to mourn her untimely death.

We had a saying in our family-  
from my mom-  
When some meal plan had gone awry  
and part of it was overcooked.

She always said-  
“I’ll take the burnt!”

The self giving love of a mother.

But even that great love pales in comparison  
to the love Christ  
demonstrated on the Cross.

Christ did not simply give up his own life for us,  
as mothers often do

Christ’s love is that,  
And oh so much more.

For in demonstrating his love on the Cross  
Christ also begins to give birth  
to a new life of faith and hope and love in US,

No less a miracle than our mothers who gave birth to us.

This new birth is different from the miracle of earthly birth,  
because its power stems from Christ’s self offered death.

The power of Christ’s blood and his love is strong,  
stronger even  
than the blood ties of human family and kinship.

In fact,  
I would say  
Membership in this new family of God  
completes and perfects

whatever may be lacking in our families of origin.

In giving his mother Mary  
To his friend John  
Christ was completing the process of his own birth,  
along with Mary's and John's also.

And today,  
our communal prayer  
becomes part of that mysterious birthing process.

In a deep way also,  
we re-enact that Golgotha scene today,  
as we remember Christ's death  
and we even expand its scope.

The crucified Christ has committed to us  
the duty and privilege of praying this afternoon  
for those whom he loves in the human family  
as in a few moments  
we will pray together the Solemn Collects.

The list is long and varied:  
believers and atheists,  
seekers and the found,  
the rich and the destitute,  
government officials and the homeless.

In truth this day,  
we open wide our arms in prayer  
as Christ has already opened wide his heart,  
.... to receive and to bless,  
.... to strengthen and to save,  
all sorts and conditions of people,  
the entire human family.

Today, Christ loves us all,  
no less and no differently  
than he loved his own dear mother and ours,  
the Blessed Virgin Mary.

So, Christ has committed all these folk to our care,  
as he committed his mother to John.

World, behold your Christ.  
Christ, behold your world.

Let us follow Mary and John's example  
and above all Christ's  
this day.

We take all people  
from this hour,  
into the home of our hearts  
in prayer and in service,  
in word and in deed,  
in the name of Christ,  
Amen.