

PASTOR'S COLUMN

“Happy Mother’s Day”

As we continue our celebration of the Feast of the Resurrection, we mark the Second Sunday of May as a national holiday, Mother’s Day.

In the United States of America, Mother’s Day was first suggested in the year 1872 by Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the words to the Battle Hymn of the Republic, as a day dedicated to peace. She would hold an organized Mother’s Day meeting in Boston, Massachusetts every year.

It wasn’t until 1907 when Anna Jarvis, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, began a campaign to establish a national Mother’s Day. Miss Jarvis persuaded her mother’s Church in Grafton, West Virginia to celebrate Mother’s Day on the second anniversary of her mother’s death, the 2nd Sunday of May. By the next year, Mother’s Day was also celebrated in Philadelphia.

She and her supporters began to write to ministers, businessmen, and politicians in their endeavor to establish a national Mother’s Day. In 1910, the governor of West Virginia proclaimed the 2nd Sunday of May as Mother’s Day and a year later every state celebrated it. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made the official announcement proclaiming Mother’s Day as a national holiday that was to be held each year on the 2nd Sunday of May.

But Jarvis’ accomplishment soon turned bitter for her. Enraged by the commercialization of the holiday, she filed a lawsuit to stop a 1923 Mother’s Day festival and was even arrested for disturbing the peace at a war mothers’ convention where women sold white carnations – Jarvis’ symbol for mothers – to raise money.

“This is not what I intended,” Jarvis said. “I wanted it to be a day of sentiment, not profit!”

When she died in 1948, at the age of 84, Jarvis had become a woman of great ironies. Never a mother herself, her maternal fortune dissipated by her efforts to stop the commercialization of the holiday she had founded. Jarvis told a reporter shortly before her death that she was sorry she had ever started Mother’s Day.

She spoke these words in a nursing home where every Mother’s Day her room had been filled with cards from all over the world. Today, because and despite Jarvis’ efforts, many celebrations of Mother’s Days are held throughout the world.

As we remember and pray for our mothers, living and deceased, I share with you this quote from Washington Irving: “A father may turn his back on his child; brothers and sisters may become inveterate enemies; husbands may desert their wives and wives their husbands. But a mother’s love endures through all; in good repute, in bad repute, in the face of the world’s condemnation, a mother still loves on, and still hopes that her child may turn from his evil ways, and repent; still she remembers the infant smiles that once filled her bosom with rapture, the merry laugh, the joyful shout of his childhood, the opening promise of his youth; and she can never be brought to think him all unworthy.”