Today as we know is Mother’s Day. On this special day, we not only honor our mothers, grandmothers, adopted mothers, godmothers, sisters, or motherly figures in our lives, we also extend our appreciation towards others who sustain us, nurtures us, and bring us life and hope. As a wise woman once said, ***“Life itself is a miracle. Each breath that we take is a gift from God and each life is precious and ordained by God.”*** So on this day, we also acknowledge our Creator who is the Mother and Father of us all!

A few years ago, I had the privilege of meeting one of my grand-aunts who lived a compelling life-giving story…and I mean that quite literally. Because she worked as a mid-wife throughout her life. Her job was to deliver babies at someone’s home. This was during a time when there were no hospitals to go to when someone is about to give birth. Over the course of her career, my grand-aunt must have delivered over hundreds, if not thousands of babies. Unfortunately, not all babies were delivered successfully. Some ended in grief and disappointment to the mother and to the family. Then she took on the role of being the emotional supporter, comforter, and healers for the mothers and for their families.

According to my mom, my grand-aunt used to keep a book that records all the babies whom she helped delivered, as well as those whose lives were short-lived. She appropriately entitled this book “***A Testimony of Life***”. When my grand-aunt died a few years ago, some came to her funeral to honor her and paid her last respect. Each human birth, and even death, as we know, begins a new chapter of the ***Testimony of Life***.

In our Old Testament reading this morning, we also read about a couple of Hebrew midwives (Siphrah and Puah). These two Hebrew midwives played a vital role in re-writing the course of human history. They were neither prophetesses nor judges, nor were they queens or mothers of significant biblical leaders. They were simply doing what they were called to do, in making house calls, delivering babies, and bringing new life to this world. However, they were remembered not for what they had done, but for what they didn’t do. Their act of defiance and heroism against the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt saved many lives of the Hebrew children while putting their lives at risk.

These midwives valued life as a gift from God. They feared God and honored God’s command instead obliging to Pharaoh’s order. **Their defiance and resistance to the establishment and authority served as a sign of testimony of their faith and courage.**

As one theologian put it, *“the midwives refused to obey the Pharaoh’s command because they feared God. Fear did not mean cowering in terror before an angry God but having a healthy sense of respect for God’s ways. They answered to a higher authority than the king of Egypt. They were in the business of life, not death.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 What about us? How often might we find ourselves in situations like those midwives who were being challenged to defy an established order unjust order from a higher authority. What stand are we willing to take, in terms of our faith and allegiance, in order to uphold our ethical and moral standards and values? Each day we are being challenged to make these choices.

 A couple of years ago, I shared with you the story about this German nurse and social worker who had no children of her own, but she was best remembered by her heroic act of smuggling children of Jewish descent out of the German occupied territories during WWII and transporting them into safety across the border elsewhere.

 Meet 29 year-old German citizen Irena Sendler, who was living in the German occupied Warsaw ghetto in Poland. Educated and trained as a nurse and a social worker, Irena took part of a grassroot underground movement challenging the mighty fascist Nazi regime. This was quite a daunting and risking operation, if you think about it, not only for the children who were being smuggled but also for theses smugglers themselves. But fear never sank across the mind of Irena and her colleagues from doing what they felt was the right thing to do.

Motivated by their Christian faith, Irena and her friends were on a mission to save as many Jewish children as she could…one child at a time. Over the years, Irena and her friends managed to rescue over 2,500 Jewish children out of the Nazi occupied Warsaw and into places where they would be safe. They changed the names of these Jewish children, dressed them more German rather than Jewish, taught them many German Christian songs and prayers, so in case they got caught by the Nazis, they would be able to recite them. She falsified birth documents in order to conceal those children’s true identity. Irena disguised herself as a plumber while transporting the children out of the area one child at a time, by hiding them in her tool boxes and in her vehicle.

As it turned out, this underground smuggling operation went on for years while slipping under the radar of the Nazis. Until one day, their trails of her operation were discovered by the Nazi police. They arrested Irena for treason and sentenced her to death by firing squad. They broke both of her legs and her arms so she could not escape, torturing her nearly to death. But on the eve of her scheduled execution, she was rescued by her friends after bribing the jail guard. Somehow, she managed to escape out of the Nazi’s hands and went into hiding until the war was over.

Despite sustaining her crippling injuries, Irena secretly maintained a book recording the names of all the children and their parents whom she smuggled out and kept them in a glass jar. She buried it under a tree in her back yard, hoping that one day these children would be reunited with their parents.

When the war was finally over, she returned to Germany hoping to relocate some of those children’s parents, if any of them might have survived the Nazi. Unfortunately, as you would imagine, most of the parents had perished. Those children were placed into orphanages, foster homes or eventually were adopted by other Christian families all across Europe. Some even got adopted overseas into the United States.

In 2008, the Nobel Peace Prize committee nominated Irena as one of the recipients of the prestigious honor, for her heroic act of self-giving and philanthropy. Even though she did not win the award, she was honored and humbled just to be nominated and to have her stories told. Many of the children whom she rescued came to honor her and to pay their tribute to her. Irena died later that same year at the age of 98.

A simple act of compassion by this young German woman, led to a courageous lifelong resistance movement against the powerful and oppressive Nazis regime. Who would’ve given her a chance? Irena’s inspiration ignited a movement that was emulated by others. She did it all in the name of God’s love for ALL people. One of her favorite verse in the Bible were from the book of Micah, “**What does the Lord require of you?.....but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?”*[[2]](#footnote-2)***

Resistance to oppression often begins in small actions.[[3]](#footnote-3) As demonstrated through the lives of Irena Sendler and those Hebrew midwives that we read in our text today, every day decisions that we make can trigger a ripple effect and leave a life-lasting impact upon the lives of others. We just never know. We may not systemically end the world of oppression, injustice or racism overnight, but just like Irena and those two Hebrew midwives, we could do our small parts that would make a difference in the lives of others.

Irena and the Hebrew midwives defied their odds against the oppressive and unjust authorities. They had claimed their new identities and callings from God, while putting their own lives at risk in preserving others. **This was their chapter of the “testimony of life”. This was their gift that they can pass on to the generations to come.**

As the Apostle Paul challenged the early church and to us today that we shall “not be conformed to [the pattern of] this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**How may we bear the testimony of life, by investing and nurturing the seeds in the lives of others? What legacy and seeds of faith are we planting in the lives of others today?**

 So as we dedicate this day to honor those mothers, grandmothers, aunts, god-mothers, or fellow sisters, who are among us or those who lift up in our remembrance with dignity and respect, we thank them for their extraordinary talents, courage and faithfulness, in sharing their lives and investing their love with us.

In closing, I would like to share with you this poem, it’s called

“**A Mother’s Love**” (Author Unknown)

***There are times when only a mother's love
Can understand our tears,
Can soothe our disappoints
And*** [***calm all of our fears***](https://www.thoughtco.com/prayer-for-dealing-with-fear-701283)***.***

***There are times when only a mother's love
Can share the joy we feel
When something we've dreamed about
Quite suddenly is real.***

***There are times when only a mother's faith
Can help us on life's way
And inspire in us the confidence
We need from day to day.***

***For a mother's heart and a mother's faith
And a mother's steadfast love
Were fashioned by the*** [***angels***](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-angels-701965) ***And sent from God above.***

1. P.47 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Micah 3:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Japinga, Lynn Preaching the Women of the Old Testament. P.50* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)