

# **The Family Bond**

by Marcia McLaughlin

**"Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." John 17:11 b**

The 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John has Jesus praying for the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. Our Lord, in this short portion of the much longer prayer, prays to God as Father. He prays that we be protected. He prays for unity among Christians.

There is no closer bond than that of parent to child. Friends are held together by mutual interests or needs. A boss keeps things together by power and control. But a father is bound to a child by love. One aspect of love is protection. A father gives protection to a child by keeping them from being hurt both physically and emotionally, from being hungry, from being without clothing and from being alone. When a young child is protected, loved and given the knowledge of God, great benefits can happen. The child grows up strong in mind, body and spirit able to withstand the distorted values of a me-oriented society along with any trials of hardships that may arise. There is created an identity with the father, a unity in being loved, and a desire to emulate that love.

So many children in the world don't have families to protect and provide for them. The lack of family can be seen everywhere. Famine, war, accident, illness, and divorce are some of the ways that families are broken apart around the world. What happens to the children and the others left? God wants us to be a family to each other especially to those young and vulnerable but also to anyone who experiences hardship or to those who just need to know they're loved and accepted.

In John 19: 26-27 some of Jesus' last words from the cross include these to his mother, Mary, "Woman, here is your son." and to his disciple, "Here is your mother." The concern was to create family and unity, and to share the love we are called to in the great commandment.

***Heavenly Father, help us to love one another as You have loved us. Let us begin in our own family – whatever shape that might take. Allow me to express my love today to those around me. Fill me with Your love more and more so that I might share that love with others. In Jesus' name, AMEN.***