

Dear mothers and grandmothers.

Dear fathers and children.

Dear people of Estonia.

The time we spend with our loved ones is the most valuable time of our life. There is always too little of it. There cannot be a happier day than Mother's Day, I believe. This is the day to spend with those we love dearest, be it in reality or in our mind. Even in reality, it should rather be in a small circle than on a festive meeting or concert, where we are inevitably away from home, family, each other.

The talk about maternity and family is often unnecessarily pragmatic. As if mothers were above all the vessels of the continuity of our people and our culture. No, dear friend, our people, our language and our culture are the environment where we thrive, better than anywhere else. But it is our mothers, our parents, our families that are the centre of our existence.

It is easy to translate the creation and maintenance of a family into figures: the amount and duration of the parent subsidy, the length of kindergarten queues and the ratio of births and deaths, or the natural growth. Of course, this can be done. But how to measure the happiness and joy of our mothers?

I don't know – but I know that it is a measurement made in the heart, not in the mind.

Our love is so often expressed by concern: we are concerned for the welfare of our children and our parents, concerned about the sacrifices and price of parenthood, concerned about our career, self-realisation, and income. We know even that Estonian women and mothers, being the most work-engaged women in Europe, share their love, concern and responsibility between home and work.

Therefore, their love must truly be boundless.

Dear friends, let us try to express our love also in joy, more and more so!

Let us make a list of joys, at least in our thoughts. Let us read it out to the mothers of our families at an appropriate time and place. Let me read mine to you right away.

The joy of doing things together: this is something we have learned from our foremothers ever since times immemorial. A week ago, in our cleaning campaign, there were many participants who cannot even remember the Baltic Chain, so young are they. Yet this shows nothing else than the selfless attitude to our environment and nature, our country and our future – inherited from our mothers.

The joy of knowledge: tomorrow, dear mothers, is another school day. In fact, every tomorrow is a school day, and you, mothers, know it better than anyone else. Every child's contact with books, reading and writing starts with his or her mother. Unfortunately, we can see and hear less and less of our fathers in that role. The yearning for knowledge and education, awakened

by our mothers, is one of the basic values that bring us to adulthood.

The joy of continuity: mothers are the ones who carry on our mother tongue, our literary language. This is not just a continuous process, but also a continuity. A child can hear its mother's voice talking already before being born. Our mothers' talk, our mothers' tongue, our mothers' stories about our families and neighbourhood, unfolding from history into the present, form an uninterrupted thread in the fabric of our country.

The joy of friendship: all these joys, dear mother, are visible in the life of our country, but also in my personal life as a son, and a husband to my wife. I am ever grateful to you for maintaining our home and our memories, for urging me and us to become better and wiser persons. And I wish to recognise your friendship by being a better man, by staying longer and more firmly by your side.

In Estonia today, women are more educated than men and live longer; still, spiritual loneliness, or loneliness in the golden years of life is not the fate a friend deserves.

During the period of Estonia's national awakening there was a lot of railing over educated Estonian men having to marry German women – the only educated women – for the sake of equal partnership. And the children of those families, of course, tended to grow up German-speaking.

As a result of this concern, educational institutions for women were opened at the first opportunity; study possibilities for women were sought and fought for in the existing ones. That fight was won, even so well, that the men's concern in the times of national awakening has today become a problem for women: the deficit of educated men at home forces them to marry foreigners, again in the name of equal partnership.

Let us, therefore, reiterate the statement made by Eduard Ludvig Wöhrmann already 100 years ago: "A man must seek knowledge!" A man must seek knowledge, as this is what a woman rightfully desires. In our present situation, it is for mothers to see to that a man can seek knowledge and go far at school. And become an educated man. An educated husband.

To the wisdom of the late Wöhrmann, I should add today: "A man must seek health!"

Therefore, let this be my Mother's Day appeal to our fathers and husbands: go to school! Educate your mind and take care of your health. This is the best way to recognise our mothers. Both the mother of your children and your own mother, whose gentle guiding words of wisdom should always stay with us.

Appreciate and love each other! Have a lovely Mother's Day!