

Happy Mother's Day to each and every mother. A mother is often the center of family life. Every human owes his or her life to a mother. The Son of God is part of the Trinity, and yet without Mary, we would not know the love of Jesus. Mary said yes to motherhood at the Annunciation. During the Crucifixion, with her heart being pierced by a sword, she said yes again to becoming Mother of the Church. We owe much to Mother Mary as we owe much to our own mothers.

Mother's Day often brings a tinge of sadness as we remember the loss of loved ones. My father was only a teenager when he lost his mother. It left a great whole in his life. My father's mother died just after Christmas while he was a senior in high school. The death was very hard for a teenager to understand and my father took to journaling for a period of two years to express his grief, to question God and to speak to his mother in writing what he could no longer tell her in person.

Mother, Dearest, what can I say,
It's been so long since you were called away.
Your endearing ways, time can't erase,
For no one else has taken your place.

How blest was I to share your arms,
Sheltered from all earthly harms.
Gentle your ways, like a peaceful dove,
Whose heart embraced a mountain of love.

When you were taken, my heart stood still,
But yet I yielded to our Father's will.
He took you home, it was your hour,
To bloom in heaven as His flower.

So precious were your loving ways,
You showered me with tender praise.
My heart recalls all that you've done,
That I may be a caring son.

No words or wealth could reimburse...
Your meaning to me in this universe.
In God's "Garden of Love," you're dearly a part
Of the orchid that blooms forever in my heart.

Each night in prayer my soul takes wings,
To be with you, where contentment springs.
How fond it is for me to recall:
You were the rarest orchid of all!

In a Wednesday Audience, Pope Francis reflected: "Despite being highly lauded from a symbolic point of view — many poems, many beautiful things said poetically of her — the mother is rarely listened to or helped in daily life, rarely considered central to society in her role.

Rather, often the readiness of mothers to make sacrifices for their children is taken advantage of..." When we fail to listen to a mother, we are all guilty of undervaluing her dignity. "Perhaps mothers, ready to sacrifice so much for their children and often for others as well, ought to be listened to more." A mother has to tend to each child with different temperaments. Pope Francis was one of five children. As his mother helped one child, another wanted attention. She was forever busy helping one then another. "Our poor mama went back and forth from one's side to another, but she was happy. She gave us so much."ⁱⁱ

In our Gospel, Jesus commands us to love one another. "Love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for [those whom one loves]" (Jn 15:13). Jesus laid down his life for us on the cross ... with love ... willingly making the ultimate sacrifice for our benefit. Jesus sets the example for mothers and fathers alike. To love as Jesus loves is to sacrifice for the good of others.

Sometimes in life we meet others who provide a mother's love in the way they care for others. This weekend, we mourn the loss of Nancy Kelly, the parish secretary for Saint Raphael's. She touched so many lives that we will never know the depth and breadth of what she did in a thousand ways. Through her yes in marriage to uniting her love for a husband, she also welcomed the love of God that helped her to grow in holiness. Through her yes to the gift of life, she became a mother, and later a grandmother. The heart expands when we say yes to God's plan and are open to children. They stretch a soul in a thousand ways helping love to grow exponentially. Love for children and grandchildren is very natural, but as the heart grows, there is increased care and concern for one's neighbors and the stranger in need.

My own father's thoughts and prayers for his beloved mother continued for a lifetime. Mothers at their best help us to know the love of God through their love for us.

In this world there is no other
To take the place of a beloved mother.
Her memory cannot be erased.
Her love can never be replaced.

Welcomed so blessedly into heaven's portal,
Her soul shall forever remain immortal.
So precious the memories she left behind.
Gone from sight ___ but never from mind.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Tozzi, Ezio M. The Rarest Orchid of All.

ⁱⁱ Pope Francis. General Audience, 7 January 2015

ⁱⁱⁱ Tozzi, Ezio M. A Beloved Mother.