

*Mother's Day*, is a special day for most people: there are so many beautiful reflections on the gift of mothers and sensing that maternal bond that exists can be a time of great gratitude and celebration. With the renewal of the consecration of the Americas to the care and protection of Mary, this year's celebration is especially poignant for people of faith. It is however, bittersweet for many of us—many of our mother's have gone before us to the promise of God's Kingdom, or perhaps the expectations that have been placed upon the maternal bond have been too much for some mothers, or perhaps we ourselves have struggled to accept the fact that our mothers are not perfect and have difficult relationships with expectations that can never be satisfied.

Sometimes we expect our mothers to be superhuman on some level—the things that they have managed to organize and accomplish through personal sacrifice and effort are mind-boggling at times, and yet we selfishly expect that same degree of accomplishment to be constant and eternal. As children, it is what we have been surrounded by, even before we were able to have conscious memory, and so we expect that it will be that way forever. Yet as we grow and mature into adults, we recognize that our mothers are not superhuman, they are not without their own faults and foibles, and they are not always as patient, as loving or forgiving as they themselves would like to be.

Growing up is bittersweet: the world is filled with all kinds of opportunities that we would like to experience. The famed lotus into which we would like to bite is more often than not, disappointing in the end. The voices of our mothers echo in the back of our minds more often than not, warning us to be careful, yet our drive to be independent makes us ignore those words. It is often with those disappointments being added to our life experiences that we return once more, wounded, to our mothers who listen, dry tears, assure us of their love and the promises of the future—that God will always be with us.

Through broken hearts, shattering disappointments, personal failures, through life-changing love, towering successes and the self-acceptance that comes with becoming fully human and responsible adults, and even to the point of becoming parents ourselves, our mothers stand by reminding us that they knew we could accomplish all these things because we are their children and they have known us best. In faith, they assure us, God will always be with us.

When the patterns of life are interrupted with the experiences of the passing of time, when our mothers change and age advances or when illness or disease intervenes, we feel robbed of that security and assurance of our mothers' presence. Yet it is still present, like the deepest currents in a river, far below the surface of things and the best of the love that has been sown into our lives bears fruit in our own words and actions. The recognition that the human condition is indeed frail and facing challenges that we sometimes feel might be too great to bear, we assure them, in faith, that God will always be with them.

Is it any wonder when we have these kinds of experiences of maternal love that the place of Mary within our faith is not populated with all kinds of expectations and devotions? I find sometimes in my own journey of faith that the Blessed Mother is the one who offers me comfort and points me in the direction of Her Son. It is with the recognition of her

humanity—unique in so many ways, bound to the human family because of Her Son, yet still so completely *mother*. Her life is marked by her ardent faithfulness to God that allows her to endure being a refugee put to flight following the birth of her Son, being widowed, impoverished, witnessing the death of her Son, and exile with St. John until the end of her life among us. And, being raised to the promise of everlasting life through the love and maternal bond with Her Son, she continues to tell us as she tells Him: I knew you could do it, I have known you from the very beginning and I love you, and God will always be with you.