
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!



I want to wish a Happy Mother's Day to all mothers, and assure them and their loved ones of my special prayers. May this May 12, 2002 be a beautiful day for all of them, and may the day and the whole year be filled with happiness.

A TWO-FACETED CELEBRATION!

Who can really tell when Mother's Day was first marked? Was it with Eve, the mother of humankind? With each of our mothers? Why did we decide on different celebrations for mothers and fathers? Couldn't one celebration have been sufficient – a Parents' Day? There was often talk of having only one celebration, but I doubt that financial and commercial reasons alone are at the root of these two celebrations. It is well to have two celebrations for those who have given us life. It is as if the celebration of life is two-faceted; nevertheless, we should not dissociate the Mother's Day celebration from Father's Day nor Father's Day from the Mother's Day celebration, since one love only is believed to be at the source of life.

MOTHER IS ALWAYS THERE!

When I think about Mother's Day I am reminded of the woman who gave me life in 1939, and who was taken from me when I was but twelve years old. Still, I sense her very close to me, very near to God; she showers me with love and tender care, she guides me in my episcopal ministry, faithful in this to her having taught us by example to follow the path of the Beatitudes. She is present whatever my age, teaching me to surrender totally to God, and she still teaches me how to pray with confidence and to walk humbly before God, in justice and holiness. Despite my sixty-two years, I need my father and mother more than ever, and I often turn to them as role models, so that I may follow them in living fully God's design for me and His people. The words of composer Robert Lebel to his mother come to mind: "I sing, I sing for you, dearest Mother. I love you, I love you with a child's heart. You created me on the workbench of patience, in the daily toil of life, until the morning of my deliverance. You it is who taught me love from the open book of tender care and carefree years, in those foolish years of my intoxication for life. You dried my tears and picked me up, as you taught me to respond to life's challenges." We have but one mother, to be with us forever. Mother dear, I love you! Watch over me still!

MOTHERS WITH A THOUSAND FACES!

No two mothers are alike, and they reveal themselves to us in a wonderful variety of situations. I see the new mothers who have just given birth, like Julie with her first child, Ariane! Marie-Ève and her second child, Gabriel, to be with Catherine. Nathalie has already a third child with Justin who has joined Samuel and Mathieu. I am reminded of other mothers who, after a painful labour period give birth to a handicapped baby. And I am reminded of other mothers, abandoned by their partners... And mothers who are faced with major financial burdens, or with cancer, or who are mourning the death of their only child... Mother's Day must not gloss over these difficult situations. There are also the older mothers, of different nationalities, and different colours; in my mind's eye I see the Native mothers, many of whom experience poverty and injustice. I think of the young mothers who day by day have to leave the house to earn a living for themselves and their

families: the secretaries, nurses, professionals in every field. They must work so hard to make ends meet! Older mothers are still hard at work in tiring jobs as waitresses and cashiers, maids and caretakers, store clerks and health-care workers in homes for the aged or in hospitals. There are also those mothers who live to see their third, fourth and even fifth generation, grandmothers, “grannies”, “grandmas”, “grams” who are so deserving of our Church and society. And what of those foster mothers and house mothers with a big heart who have taken in two and even three children not their own? These mothers with a thousand faces, how beautiful they are, how big-hearted they are, full of tenderness and affection! Paul John Paul II says: “Motherhood is an exalted gift which the Church constantly praises. How could she do otherwise, since she recognizes and acknowledges the beginnings of salvation, and of her own existence in the virginal motherhood of the Virgin Mother of Christ.”

LITANIES IN THE MIDST OF HUMDRUM TASKS

Father Louis Rétif composed a beautiful prayer to the Virgin Mary: *“From all around, from the busy crowds, the same buses and trains, the same thud of hastening footsteps in the market place... Same laughter, same sadness. We are definitely all alike! Receive our concerns, they are our litanies! Our Lady of Humdrum Tasks, Our Lady of the endless laundry, Our Lady of joyless days, Our Lady of restless nights, Our Lady of uncertain tomorrows, Our Lady of penniless ends-of-the-month, Our Lady of vacationless years... Humble housekeeper, anonymous neighbour, always available and persevering; from your poorly sheltered Nativity to the emptiness of our slums, from your mother’s anxieties to our concerns for our children, from your random acts of kindness to our services to one another,.. From your poor but happy life to our jealousies and selfishness, Hail, Mary!... Mother of humankind, you watch over the cradle of a world being made, and this world is your Son who keeps growing; In your overwhelming joy, at Easter dawn, in your deep love at each day’s beginning we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our resurrection and our life.”*

GOSPEL OF LIFE

Mothers from here and elsewhere, you have planted a garden the likes of which cannot be found. You give us each day the Gospel of Life. On behalf of the Church of our diocese and in my own name I express my heartfelt gratitude. You have given Life, and I am certain that the Lord will give you a share of the Life he has promised. *“As one puts in a garden as summer comes, as the seed is sowed in early May, let us each day give to the Gardener the work of our hands and our gifts of love. And may God be ever in our homes as a chorus of love to our daily song. As we pass on the fire by proudly holding up the torch of time, let us carry the love of God to our children’s hearts, that its bright light may shine in the hearts of our children”* (Robert Lebel).

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