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Our Lady: And Mother's Day

The Catholic, if asked what are the most beautiful words in the English language, would unhesitatingly say Jesus and Mary. But it is also fundamental that there is another name without which there would never have been a Jesus or Mary in the Divine Plan of Redemption. That name is Mother.

In the world in which we live, come next Sunday even the irreligious will pause to honor this name of our living and dead heroines who walked in the shadow of death that we might have life. As in previous years, selfish commercial appeals would have us honor our mothers with material tokens--the florists with carnations, confectioners with candy, telegraph companies with missives of sentiment. It would be poor judgment on the part of a Notre Dame student to mistake and supplant the spiritual with such emotional and sentimental gush. And there is a spiritual significance to Mother's Day. This spiritual significance will be understood in proportion as we understand the history of womanhood.

There are two pictures: the one sad and cruel, painted in the annals of paganism, wherein we see woman with no human rights or privileges--used as a beast of burden and the slave of man in Africa, the victim to be burned alive in India, the chattel of base men in the harems of Babylonia and Egypt. And there is the other picture of woman's exaltation in motherhood, presented to us by the Church in her Ancient and New Testament history.

There is Eve, our first mother in the Old Testament; there is the self-sacrificing Mother Rachel; there is St. Anne the mother of Mary, and Elizabeth, the mother of the Baptist; we have the martyr-mother Felicitas, the empress-mother Helena, the broken-hearted mother Monica and countless others.

But it is to Mary the Mother of Christ that we go for the perfect picture of ideal womanhood--and motherhood. In her are blended the two most beautiful elements of womanhood--unsullied virginity and motherhood. This marvelous mystery of Mary's career is the reason why motherhood is so hallowed today. It is the reason why we Catholics know a religious significance to Mother's Day. It is the reason why we do not have to think of next Sunday's theme in terms of flowers or candy or greeting cards exclusively. There is deep in our hearts the conviction that the perfect God-man chose the perfect Mother, thus blessing for all times the institution of motherhood.

And although there is deep down in our individual hearts the beautiful instinct to picture our own earthly mother as the ideal mother, every Catholic mother's first instruction to her children is that just as Christ was the perfect Son, so Mary was the perfect Mother. That is because Mary knew from her career, as all mothers know, but to the highest degree, what sorrows and sacrifices, anxieties and heartaches and cares are the part of motherhood. That is why we can look into the hearts of both our mothers and see similar stories written therein not only of Sorrows but of Joys also.

Because Mary is the spiritual Mother of all of us, there is always the consoling reality that our perfect Mother Mary, the all-powerful Mother of Christ is watching over our earthly mothers--living and dead--as well as the needs of us her spiritual children. In consequence of this we can show our earthly mothers no greater honor, no higher gratitude, than by warmly and confidently beseeching the Mother of Mothers to continue to bless and protect them.