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Let's Give Our Mothers a Break This Year.

The day after Christmas a man came into the priest's house to make arrangements for his mother's funeral. It was set for Wednesday. The man then remarked: "She was certainly a good woman. If she isn't in Heaven, then there isn't any Heaven." It was a good thing for the mother's reputation that he dropped the remark; one would not have guessed it from the sequel. On Wednesday morning the funeral came; the mourners were twenty-four descendants of this woman, and they all remained seated during the Consecration. There was not a Catholic in the whole outfit. Not one!

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A few years ago a priest was giving the Last Blessing to an old Irish lady. One of her sons was kneeling beside the bed, sobbing. The priest prayed a few moments, the lines of sorrow on the old face relaxed, and the poor woman breathed her last. The son arose from his knees and shook the priest's hand. "Father," he said, "she was an angel from Heaven, but she had four devils for sons." The speaker had, a short time before, received his second divorce (both of them after nationally-broadcast scandals) and was now courting a divorcee.

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If those two mothers were as good as their children said they were, the kids were hardly giving them a fair break. Motherhood has been, at least for some centuries up to the present, a cherished and sacred institution. History has given us a record of some infamous women, but most of these, thank God, were not mothers. Biographers make it a point to trace to their subject's mother as many of his good points as they can, and the world generally considers that a man's good deeds or evil reflect credit or discredit on the mother who bore him.

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It is not only in the third person that we make this observation; it is even more delicately true in the first person. The final test for waning manhood in a human derelict is the insult to his mother. If he will fight for her name, he still has in him the makings of a man; if he refuses to leap to the defense of her honor, he is looked upon as a degenerate, an outcast, a dog, scum of the earth.

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Now if we know that the world judges of our mothers by our actions, and if we feel surging within us the loyalty that makes us willing to die for the defense of her name, it is a strange inconsistency that permits us to do things that will bring odium to her name or her memory -- to say nothing of the things that bring grief to her own heart. We have often heard people say: "That boy must have a good mother;" and we have also heard them say: "What kind of a mother can that boy have?"

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We have just been reflecting on the heart-breaks of a couple of Notre Dame mothers. Mrs. Kelly's noble letter, published Thursday on the Bulletin, brought tears to many eyes. She had borne three children, and now she has given the last one back to God. Mrs. Gallagher said the night before Frank died: "God gave him to me; if He wants him back now, who am I that I should deny Him?" With broken hearts they made their sacrifice, but their hearts were comforted even then -- Mrs. Gallagher's when Frank kept repeating the aspirations she had taught him, Mrs. Kelly's when Gene, too weak to speak, moved his lips in prayer and raised his right hand to bless himself.

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Thank God, there is such a thing as reparation, and for the sins of neglect, of ingratitude, of insult, of baseness, of cruelty, of wantonness, of wilfulness, of selfishness, of spite, of treason to her good name, we can make amends -- not to the full, perhaps, but to the point of deep consolation. Let us dedicate this year to our mothers. Let's give them a break this year. We owe them many prayers that we have neglected to say; we owe them the good reputation that our good deeds can bring them. Daily Communion can help us to give them a break.

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PRAYERS are requested ~~for~~ by Fred Arble for his father, who is very ill. Frank Noll is in very poor condition following an appendicitis operation.