



Fourth Sunday of Easter May 11, 2014 A

Mother's Day Reflection

- *A single mom*
- *Quotes to reflect on*

The following reflection is by Anne Marie Liebhaber which she gave at her Catholic parish on Mother's Day. She writes:

Good Evening/Morning! I am honored to have opportunity today, Mother's Day 1996, to share with you my thoughts on the great dignity of motherhood. I especially want to tell you about the story of single mothering, of which I am so familiar—both personally as well as professionally.

As some of you may know, I am the mother of six children whom I have raised alone for the past sixteen years since my husband left. So I know personally the incredible experience of mothering, with its many joys and sorrows, its humbling yet enriching work, and its "costs," if you will, to women. Once a woman embraces motherhood it is hers forever--she can never rescind its effects.

I am also an attorney. My legal work focuses on family issues. Through Catholic Family Services CAPA Program I have developed a legal services project to bring free legal assistance to single parents. Most of my clients are single mothers struggling to raise their children alone in a culture that is increasingly hostile to them and their children. I observe from their stories that our secular culture ignores the needs of single mothers, discounts their lives as unimportant, and considers their contributions and the hard work of their mothering as worthless. It is to these young single mothers and to mothers everywhere, especially my own dear mother, that I dedicate my words today.

I deeply appreciate the lives and work of all women who mother but especially wish to recognize and pay tribute to single mothers. These are women with great dignity and courage for they have given life, often amidst overwhelming circumstances and with great personal pain. In the face of a culture that advocates the killing of "inconvenient" unborn children, these bruised but courageous women chose life.

They are women who instinctively recognize the sacred fact that their pregnancy means a new life is present within their bodies. Sometimes these women are

experiencing abuse or are in situations of severe poverty. They are often rejected and shamed for their pregnancy. But they know their baby's life must be respected and be allowed to come to fruition.

Thus these simple women, so easily discarded and condemned by society, recognize, more clearly than many of society's most learned individuals, the great truth of the dignity and mystery of life. And despite great personal cost to themselves they give life to their babies.

Often single mothers will endure abuse and abandonment as they insist on "having" their babies. Most are not celebrated in their maternity—few are given baby showers or have beautifully decorated nurseries. Many give birth alone without the comforting arms of a supportive spouse or loving family member. Most go home alone with their babies as they embark on their journey of single parenting.

Single mothers are women who deeply love their children. I have observed time and time again that in their struggles, despite significant cost to themselves, these mothers make countless sacrifices for their children, often under extremely adverse conditions. Even those mothers whose personal wounds affect their ability to parent effectively still deeply love their children and want the best for them. When Jesus comforted His mother and the crying women on the Way of the Cross, He acknowledged the sacred bond between a mother and her child which causes women to suffer when their children do.

Nowhere is a mother's selfless love more evident than in those mothers who give life and then relinquish their baby to another's care. The memory and experience of giving life is never forgotten, and birth mothers carry their sometimes hidden dignity in their hearts, along with the memories of their child, always remembered and always loved. Each Mother's Day can re-ignite the pain of their sacrifice. I wish to honor these mothers for their great dignity and unselfish love.

An adoptive mother's love is unique in that, although the physical aspect of birthing is absent, the adoptive mother embraces the child of another's body and "births" that child over time. By her determined, consistent, and selfless love, the adoptive mother gives life to that child as surely, and as nobly, as did the child's birth mother. I wish to honor the beautiful maternity of the adoptive mother also.

All mothers in fact bear a great and singular dignity as they have co-created with God to bear and nurture life. The dignity of woman as mother is, I believe, woman's highest dignity.

My own experience of mothering has been the most profound experience of my life. I am wiser because of my children for they have taught me about life at its fullest. I am made happy and proud as together we journey through life. And I am humbled by looking at them now full grown into adulthood.

I am struck again now by the same observation I had when I first felt each of them move within my body—that this miracle of life unfolds with a precision and a dynamic for which I can take no credit, no ownership. For an Awesome and Holy Power cares for and grows up my children today as surely as that Same Loving Power, whom I call God, formed their faces while they were yet in my body.

That same God, Who gives us all here present today countless gifts including our own dear mothers, our children, our lives, our talents and our possessions, loves us with a Love which is very much maternal in nature. Through the Catholic Church—truly the Mother Church—our very souls are "birthed" in Baptism and nurtured by Holy Eucharist. Only Catholics believe that Jesus is actually physically present in the Host, thus Our Lord remains with us here on Earth hidden in the "womb" of Holy Mother the Church.

When Our Lord promised the apostles that He "would not leave them orphans," He in turn formed the Church. Throughout the ages, Holy Mother Church has functioned as the "giver" of spiritual life and the nurturer of our souls. She has never abandoned her errant children but rather seeks reconciliation and unity. Yet Mother Church remains faithful to her children and will not compromise the truths which we need to gain Eternal Life. Even today, in the face of ridicule and contempt, Mother Church teaches with uncompromising courage, the sacredness of all human life and the great dignity of woman as mother.

And, finally the Catholic Church alone proclaims the great nobility of the Mother of Jesus, Mary Most Holy, whose magnificent maternity and simple domestic work co-redeemed humankind. And so it is that the work of motherhood is glorified and sanctified.

In closing, I want to wish all mothers here today a Blessed Feast Day! Happy Mother's Day!

REFLECTIONS ON MOTHERHOOD

- "No man is poor who has had a godly mother."
-Abraham Lincoln
- "The heart of a mother is a deep abyss at the bottom of which you will always find forgiveness."
-Honoré de Balzac
- "Youth fades; love droops, the leaves of friendship fall; a mother's secret hope outlives them all."
-Oliver Wendell Holmes
- "Before becoming a mother I had a hundred theories on how to bring up children. Now I have seven children and only one theory: love them, especially when they least deserve to be loved." -Kate Samperi
- "Making a decision to have a child—it's momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."
-Elizabeth Stone
- "If you bungle raising your children, I don't think whatever else you do well matters very much."
-Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis
- "Adorable children are considered to be the general property of the human race. Rude children belong to their mothers."
-Judith Martin
- "The mother loves her child most divinely, not when she surrounds him with comfort and anticipates his wants, but when she resolutely holds him to the highest standards and is content with nothing less than his best."
-Hamilton Wright Mabie
- "Motherhood brings as much joy as ever, but it still brings boredom, exhaustion, and sorrow too. Nothing else ever will make you as happy or as sad, as proud or as tired, for nothing is quite as hard as helping a person develop his own individuality especially while you struggle to keep your own."
- Marguerite Kelly and Elia Parsons
- "A mother understands what a child does not say."
-Jewish Proverb
- "The mother-child relationship is paradoxical and, in a sense, tragic. It requires the most intense love on the mother's side, yet this very love must help the child grow away from the mother, and to become fully independent."
-Erich Fromm
- "A mother is she who can take the place of all others but whose place no one else can take."
-Cardinal Mermillod
- "Of all the rights of women, the greatest is to be a mother."
-Lin Yu-tang

- “Every mother is like Moses. She does not enter the Promised Land. She prepares a world she will not see.” -Pope Paul VI
- “The mother is the most precious possessions of the nation, so precious that society advances its highest well-being when it protects the functions of the mother.” -Ellen Key
- “Most of all the other beautiful things in life come by twos and threes, by dozens and hundreds. Plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers, and sisters, aunts and cousins, but only one mother in the whole world.” -Kate Douglas Wiggin

Have a blessed Mother's Day,

A. Aaron