

Happy Mother's Day to all our mothers! The concept that "Mother knows best," in all matters related to her children, has been around almost as long as mothers have, and seems to be part of God's design for motherhood. A mother is called to combine a life of frequent multitasking, remembering birthdays, doctor appointments, and school supplies, with the need to attain a deep focused presence with the children seeking her council. As God created us in His image and likeness, he seems to have made motherhood REQUIRE both His image and His likeness.

Only in motherhood does God share the role of life-giving creativity, the carrying and birthing of children. Psalm 139 says, "You knit me together in my mother's womb." Then, with Mary, God elevates this role even further by delegating the responsibility of carrying His divine Son in her womb. Mothers know best because mothers take on so much.

In scripture, God often refers to motherhood to characterize His comfort and protection poured out on His people. In Isaiah 66 God says, "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." In Hosea 13 God is compared to a mother bear protecting her cubs, and In Matthew 23 Jesus compares his longing to protect Jerusalem to a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings. Comfort and protection come along with loving their children who are needy by design, and preparing them, with help from fathers, to face the world on their own.

But the mother's role goes far beyond just the physical. Mothers are also uniquely equipped to nurture the INNER LIFE of their children and others. In his encyclical on the Dignity and Vocation of Women, St John Paul II states that a woman's nature is specifically TUNED to the 'prophetic' task of nurturing the inner life of others. He says a mother's 'knowing' isn't just about facts; it is a 'wisdom of the heart'. It allows her to recognize the needs of a child's soul before the child can even express them." You could say that mothers know best because they have a special grace to make the journey from the head to the heart.

In today's gospel, Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept." Mothers are a conduit of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate from the Father, who speak the truth, even when it is difficult to hear. And that truth and the mother's love stay with us in our hearts and minds throughout our lives.

Pope Francis, while in graduate studies in Germany, came across a painting of Mary untying a complex tangle of knots in a rope. He's made the painting famous by spreading the word that Mary is an "Undoer of knots." This speaks to the ability of a mother to patiently overcome the tangled complexity of human relationships she partakes in daily.

It is the mother's very design to be nurturing, sustaining, protecting, and wise that make her a physical manifestation of God's own heart toward his creation. Her work is all encompassing, and often overwhelming and exhausting. We owe a debt of gratitude to our mothers for their perseverance in taking on US, their children, and guiding us through all the stages of life.