

## The High Calling of Motherhood

*My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery.*

from G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*

Every single Christian is called to a specific purpose: a distinct role in Christ's Kingdom. I've always found the phrase, "full-time Christian service" (when referring to ministerial vocations) to be a bit misleading—as if there is such a thing as a "part-time" Christian. Whether an individual is a businessman, a teacher, or an artist, that person is called by God to serve in the world to further the Church's redemptive mission. Whether acting ethically when co-workers are cheating, or motivating children to learn about God's creation, or worshiping the Lord through beauty, every man, woman and child is called to be a full-time Christian on the job, at home and at play.

Perhaps the most sacred and beautiful calling is that of motherhood. The importance of mothers is not mere sentiment—this holy calling is integral to the shaping of future generations of good churchmen and women.

One of the greatest theologians of the Church was St. Augustine. His father was a pagan but his mother, Monica, was a Christian. In his spiritual autobiography, *Confessions*, Augustine tells how during his licentious youth his father would often encourage him to act immorally, but his mother pleaded with him to convert to Christianity. She prayed continually for her son to be saved and live a moral life. Monica literally followed her son all around the Roman Empire begging him to be saved and be baptized. Augustine eventually did convert and became a bishop at Hippo, where he spoke out strongly against heretics and defended orthodoxy. He authored some of the greatest apologetic writings, including *The City of God*. Without the persistence of a mother, the Church would've been without one of its most powerful leaders and writers.

Because my mom is out of town, she won't be able to stop me from bragging on her a bit—anyway, it's Mother's Day I *should* get to brag on her. My own mother has been a dedicated servant to our church for these past 25 years. She has kept our pastor sane by unconditionally loving him and truly being a helpmeet to his ministry. She has faithfully been the church pianist and coordinated our worship services. At some time or another, she has served as youth director, janitor, nursery director, secretary, and all-purpose errand runner for the pastor. And of course, she provides delicious deserts for the annual WMS Christmas parties—as the official taste-tester, I ought to know!

But without a doubt, my mother's greatest service to the Church was raising Heather, Juliana, Jonathan, and Sean. She taught us to love God, to pray, to be faithful to church, to give, and to serve in our church. Indeed, her greatest accomplishment has been producing four young people that have a desire to further Christ's Kingdom. She has truly been fruitful and multiplied. She has reproduced after her kind by delivering four Christians to the world.

My siblings and I would probably admit that our love of learning and discovery in God's word comes from our dad. But we get from our mother the compassion, humility, and heart for service that is required to be used in the Church. Her tenderness and sympathy made us into something more than just tinkling brass or sounding cymbal—she gave us love.

This unique calling of motherhood is never one of resignation. No one is ever *just* a mother. On this Mother's Day, let us remember that it is not a matter of just sentimentality for the women who kissed our boo-boos, made us cookies and milk, and put our good grades on the refrigerator. Our mothers were all divinely called to make us into lovers of God and servants of His Kingdom.

-Sean Pope

### Sonnet to My Mother

Those hands could comfort me and ease me best  
 Whose fingers traced within my palm a crease,  
 And lightly danced upon piano keys—  
 From which sweet music lulled me into rest.  
 With subtle passion, doting hands obsessed  
 To patch the gaping holes that bared my knees,

And often this without a simple “please.”  
Unsung, upraised, no pride did they attest.  
In hindsight, though, I’m given grace to look  
Upon the past as story in a book  
And know that things meant much more than I thought—  
That mother’s hands were vital to the plot;  
And nowhere did they demonstrate such care  
As when they folded each night during prayer.

Jonathan Pope

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