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# Meeting God in Motherhood

OPENING OUR HEARTS  
TO MOMENTS OF GRACE



**TWENTY-THIRD  
PUBLICATIONS**

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## INTRODUCTION

“Close your eyes and put out your hands!”

I immediately shut my eyes and my brain begins its random scanning of all the possible objects that my three-year-old is now about to place into my palms. What will it be today?

*Curdled playdough, a backyard flower, last week's jelly toast found under the couch. Please, God, just don't let it be something slimy!*

My children, like most, delight in surprises. Recently, they've discovered joy in the act of surprising someone else. While I admit to sometimes subtly cocking my head at the perceived value in some of these gifts (like the petrified breakfast remnants), I also embrace the opportunity to rejoice and be glad in the tiny tokens of their love for me.

“The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in the field...” (Matthew 13:44).

Could motherhood possibly be the fertile field of God's grace in my life? Could my daily living perhaps be a parable for the presence and the depth of Love in my seemingly commonplace vocation?

I pause and wonder at the beauty in these little moments. Could these be opportunities to meet God in my daily mothering? Tiny hands slipping into mine, a knowing wink from my husband across the family dinner table, gently wrinkled construction paper cards filled with adorable spelling errors and backwards written letters—each is a love note from God to me.

Sometimes I miss these encounters because of household distractions, a tight schedule, or even my poor attitude. Unknowingly, I've shoved them aside to finish a load of laundry, finish making lunches, or finish a personal thought.

And yet these moments arise again and again and again. Motherhood has become the training ground for my heart. Through both laughter and tears, in both celebrations and frustrations, with both lessons learned and lacking wisdom, motherhood is stretching and strengthening my heart. My soul is learning to grow in a way that only allows even more Grace to fill it.

God is in the thick of this existence.

Meeting our loving God in this season of life holds the power to transform us, mind and soul.

What happens when we allow motherhood to shepherd our hearts into a holy alignment with our tender God?

What happens when we adopt a sacred stance in the middle of tantrums and tiredness and the toils of the seemingly endless daily tasks?

What happens when we intentionally choose a posture of the heart that seeks the face of God?

With each brush with the divine, something beautiful takes greater shape.

Callousness ripens into contentment in the center of trying situations.

Protests transform into praise in the midst of familiar disappointments.

Misdeeds discover mercy in the face of total failure.

Motherhood is certainly not the only part of our identity giving us glimpses into the face of Jesus, but it is surely a powerful one. It's sometimes easy to feel like wiping sticky cheeks, kissing bruised knees, and checking the evening's homework has become the totality of our earthly existence. Some days it seems as if there is nothing left over to offer our souls but the dried-out crusts from our children's grilled cheese sandwiches. Never forget that there is and always will be more to you than your role as a mother. In the eyes of our loving Savior, each of us is a beautiful prism reflecting *all* of the glorious parts of who we were created to be to the world. The smudges from your children's fingerprints all over your heart only serve to make your story more unique.

Encountering God in your mothering can be a transformative gift. Perhaps it is the very one you've been seeking, like me?

Friend, I invite you, too, to "close your eyes and put out your hands."

Heart open, palms up, ready to receive Beauty and Hope and Goodness.

Posture your heart and prepare for Peace.

You deserve abundance.

Meet God in your motherhood.

# Belovedness

WITH A KNOWING LOOK OF DISAPPOINTMENT, SHE WAVED A FINGER AT ME. She pointed out my pregnancy acne scars, the dark circles under my eyes, my ill-fitting peanut butter-stained shirt, my postpartum thinning hair, and my 20 pounds of too much funfetti birthday cake. She reminded me that I had snapped at my children yesterday morning for spilling syrup on the freshly washed sofa slipcover. She whispered a warning that I could never be like all those other moms who manage to pull off the liturgically correct cupcakes and the coordinated, freshly ironed Sunday outfits. And then, that woman staring at me in the mirror quietly gathered herself, took a deep breath, and bravely chose to begin her day.

Have you ever woken up to the broken record player of your mind woefully chanting “diapers and naps and snacks, oh my!”? Have you awkwardly rejected compliments about your gifts and talents because you felt there was no possible way they could be used during this season of storytimes and homework and soccer practices? Have you shied away from opportunities or relationships because you feared your identity as a mother had somehow caused you to forget who you know yourself to be at the very core of your being?

Me, too.

What we choose to believe to be true about ourselves reveals what we believe to be true about God. And the oppo-

site is true. What we choose to believe to be true about God should reveal what we believe to be true about ourselves—as mothers, as wives and friends and sisters and daughters, and as women.

Do you believe that God is love? Do you believe that God created you so very good? Do you believe that God has bestowed deep purpose on the very miracle of your aliveness?

Our compassionate Creator bestowed upon you the gift of motherhood because you were fashioned in Love and with Love and through Love. You were designed to share that Love, both with the world and with the little souls that pitter-patter around the corners of your home and heart. Motherhood doesn't detract from your identity as a child of God. Motherhood deepens it.

It is so easy to allow the torment of comparison or utter exhaustion to cast a shadow over the Light burning within us. It is time to return our gaze to that Light. Peel the layers of self-criticism from your eyes and clearly see your worth for whom God created you to be as you are in this moment.

Let's rejoice at the miracle of our very aliveness. Let's celebrate the inherent goodness with which we were created. Let's accept at the very core of our being that we are made in God's image and likeness and are so very good.

You are God's beloved.

## **PRAY**

*Compassionate Creator, help me to see myself as your precious child, your chosen daughter, your beloved one. Give me a heart that recognizes your divine presence within me and treats myself with dignity and respect. Let me feel your tender love mothering me as I mother my own children. Amen.*

## **PONDER**

*Genesis 1 and 2:* Reflect on the truth that God has created you in God's image.

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*Psalms 139:* Name the ways in which you have been fearfully and wonderfully made. Name what you believe to be your strengths as a mother.

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*Matthew 5:13-16:* Recognize the Light of Christ in your life. Specifically think of your children in your reflection.

## **POSTURE**

- ⇒ Take a few minutes to gaze at your own eyes in the mirror. If you are distracted by your self-perceived flaws, redirect your gaze back to looking directly into your own eyes. Hold your gaze here until you see the spark of the Divine resting within you.

- Write a letter to your younger self (possibly when you were pregnant with your first) offering the words of encouragement you needed to hear at that time. Note how you have grown in wisdom because of your motherhood.
- Compliment another mother and point out her belovedness to her.
- When feeling overwhelmed by emotions or to-dos, pause for a few minutes. Allow yourself to actively feel the presence of God's love for you in this moment.
- Carve out time this week for an activity that you genuinely love doing. You are deserving of the opportunity to delight in being alive.

### **QUESTIONS *for* REFLECTION/DISCUSSION**

What are the parts of yourself that you view with judgmental eyes? What do you think Jesus would say about those same parts were you to sit down in your living room or at your dinner table with him?

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How does the knowledge that you are God's beloved affect both your perspective of and your living out your vocation of motherhood?

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How might your identity and your experiences as a mother serve as a fresh opening for understanding God's love in a new way?



# Contentment

I STOOD IN THE HOT SUN, SIFTING THROUGH DIRT AND ROCKS. A five-gallon bucket of grimy pebbles rested next to my feet. My two children pushed around a couple of vintage Tonka trucks while simultaneously begging for me to retrieve their water bottles from the car. I was tired. And hungry. And praying that my deodorant would hold up to the summer temperatures quickly rising from where we stood on the riverbank. And yet, despite my discomforts, I was determined to find a sapphire.

Over a hundred years ago, miners looking for gold dredged the Missouri River just outside of Helena, Montana. They rejoiced in their findings but, perhaps more significantly, bequeathed the area with mounds and mounds of waste. The seemingly worthless rocks and dirt, called tailings, were dumped by the tons on the riverbanks to be forgotten. Whether it was unbeknownst or unimportant to them, the miners left behind a plentitude of precious gems—sapphires, garnets, and rubies—buried in the tailings. Currently, several small mining operations make a living off of unearthing jewels from the tailings and welcoming guests, like my family, to do the same.

How often do we, as mothers, simply plow through the day and then declare it a loss at the end just because we didn't find that gold nugget of parenting success? How often do we

toss aside the seemingly forgettable moments of any given 24 hours without taking pause to reflect on the precious jewels that might be waiting for us should we bring the imperfection of those hours before God in prayer?

Sometimes, in order to grow in our contentment as mothers, we have to “check the tailings.” Or, perhaps, “consider it all joy” (James 1:2). It’s easy to allow fatigue and frustration to prevent us from actively seeking where we experienced God in both the highs and, just as importantly, the lows of each day. Rooted deeply in the Ignatian tradition, examining the happenings of our days more carefully through the lens of honest prayer might be the exact mining we need to do to discover the satisfaction and serenity that await us in our earthly vocations.

Abundance in motherhood is discovered in the simple act of living life with and for God. Let’s aim to fill our hearts with the truth of the word and the grace of the sacraments rather than earthly consumption of goods or superficial displays of style. We need not place gold nuggets on our mantels or wear them around our necks; rather, let’s place our hearts before our loving Creator and ask for the divine wisdom to not miss out on the precious moments of each day. God has left these jewels specifically for us to find and delight in; the often-grimy moments of our daily living are indeed filled with mercy and hope and goodness.

Happiness stems from temporal pleasures, but lasting joy flourishes from the ongoing realization that our fulfillment in life is directly tied to how openly our hearts seek the gift of God’s presence right on the very earth God created under our feet.

Let’s seek that tremendous gift from above today.

## PRAY

*Spirit of Love, give me eyes that graciously look for the precious gift of your presence in my daily living. Give a heart that mindfully and honestly reflects on how you are working in and through my mothering. Let me never hesitate to bring to you my consolations and desolations and trust that you are using the entirety of my life for your glory. Amen.*

## PONDER

*Matthew 6:* Name treasures or possessions you expect to be included in “your daily bread.” Next, name the intangible gifts you hope to receive from God that will truly equip you as you fulfill your vocation as a mother.

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*John 10:* Reflect on how your Good Shepherd tends to your every need each and every day.

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*James 1:* Ponder how you’ve grown in perseverance in your vocation as a mother as you’ve received “every perfect gift” from above.

## POSTURE

- ⇒ Commit to spending more time with Scripture through a Bible study, devotional, or reflection on the daily Mass readings.

- Make a habit of praying a daily examen to reflect honestly on the consolations and desolations of each 24 hours.
- Try to not make any unessential purchases this month. Educate yourself on where your household products are made and how you can make more ethical and sustainable purchases that benefit all of God's creation. Seek contentment in the "who" and the "why" rather than the "what."
- Make a list of your life's successes that are based on your growth in virtue rather than professional advancement or external validation.
- Give an unexpected compliment to a stranger. Speak Christlike words to her.

### **QUESTIONS *for* REFLECTION/DISCUSSION**

Currently, where do you most and least experience God in your vocation as a mother?

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How would you explain the difference between joy and happiness?

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Does contentment come easily to you or does this posture of the heart feel more like an ongoing struggle? Why do you think this is? What is one specific activity during your day in which you would like to grow in contentment?