

Daniel's reflection for week beginning March 26th – The First Blessing

My life wears many colours and has taken endless twists and turns. The decades of my earthly journey have carried all kinds of lights and shadows, virtues and vices, blessings and burdens. But through it all that has been one shining conviction forever holding me together - the certainty that I am well loved. Time and again when all other supports have collapsed and the temptation to despair is very strong, this fierce belief that I somehow matter a great deal fills me with new and powerful resolve.

With all my heart I know that it was the love of my mother that gifted me with that flaming centre to light my way when many other remedies failed. My childhood must have filled me with a sense that my mother was delighted with me, that she was proud of me, that I was a wholesome person. It was through her I believe that I felt good about myself, felt that I was worthy of respect, enabling me to be secure enough to take the risks in life that I am called to take. Sometimes I had to dig deep to overcome the self-doubt, and to experience again that conviction that I mattered, that someone truly believed in me.

Without this inner experience of being unconditionally loved how else could I understand that I am so extravagantly loved by God? . . . What a divine responsibility for any mother to be the one who opens the child up, or closes her down to the beautiful love of a beautiful God. There is something about the compassionate devotion of God that can only be captured on this earth by the selfless and unique heart of a mother. The total and unconditional love with which a mother holds her fretting baby, strokes her child's hair, wraps her in a towel after her bath, wakes up every night to comfort and soothe the troubled dreams of her toddler, overlooks yet another sudden tantrum - these moments and a million more are the truest reflection in our young lives of the constant love of our Mother-God for all of us. Pope Francis provides many touching examples of the truth of these observations – these domestic experiences of the fullness of grace.

It is the mother's smile, her touch, her voice that awakens love in the heart of the little one. The child is coaxed and cajoled into an awareness of the beckoning life by the eyes and whispers of the mother. The small baby is caressed and lured outside herself into delighted kicking self-expression by the playful fingers and words of the devoted mother. Maybe most of all, the tiny heart is opened to its first pang of compassion when, for whatever reason, it feels the mysterious tears of its adored lover. And all of this is God's work too. As the gentle morning sun persuades the daisy to open its eyes, it is the light of God in a mother and baby that creates this miraculous awakening. How else could God enjoy the sensation of holding, enticing and celebrating the most wonderful miracle of new life if not through mothers?

As we celebrate Mother's Day this weekend my wish to the mothers who read this is that your children may one-day bless and honour you, as I do my mother, for the fire of inner conviction she lit in my heart. And we pray for the many who do not have those healing memories to call on when the night is too dark. But God sends many angels in many guises to bring the light.

(Prism of Love, pp 85 and 86)