

Blessings

celebrating the

Joy of Faith

PREMIERE ISSUE

SPRING 2012

**Mary Mother
of God**

Buttermilk Waffles

Mother's Day Projects

Celebrating the Joy of Faith

It is our pleasure to introduce you to *Blessings*, a fruit of Women of the Word Toronto. We are today's Catholic women: witnesses and professors in faith, dedicated to inspiring devotion, strength, and purpose as true daughters of God. In our mission we have created an artistic and intellectual magazine to inspire, teach, and help one another grow in faith as a Catholic community.

We hope that *Blessings* will provide a message of faith that will challenge and empower women in their daily lives. We want to open the hearts of our readers and inspire today's women to foster their relationship with God. In the pages of our magazine you will find stories of Catholic witness, ways of putting faith into practice, teachings of the catechism of the Catholic Church, and biblical inspirations. Alongside these messages of faith you will find creative projects, recipes, and other articles that will foster your mind, body, and soul. It is our goal to exemplify to the reader the possibility of weaving faith into our everyday lives.

When we came together to start *Blessings*, all we had was a vision and a dream; today that dream has become a reality. What you see before you is a labour of love, one that we pray exalts our faith and provides inspiration. It is with great anticipation we humbly present *Blessings Magazine* to you. We hope that you find as much meaning in reading the pages as we did in putting them together.

Pax et bonum
Daniela DiPanfilo

*“To fall in love with
God is the greatest of
all romances; to seek
Him, the greatest
adventure; to find
Him, the greatest
human achievement.”*

St. Augustine



Blessings Committee

Mary Filangi	Publisher
Daniela Di Panfilo	Editor-in-Chief
Anne MacInnes	Editor
Celia Ieradi	Creative Director
Vanessa Rico	Graphic Designer
Not pictured: Cheri Natale Associate Publisher	

Women of the Word

Linda Di Panfilo, Sandra DeIuliis, Mary Filangi, Julia Peca, Emma Ieradi, Antonietta Filangi

Not pictured: Bruna Merolle, Sister Christine Minicucci

Blessings

Contents *Spring 2012*

Creative Channel

DIY Mother's Day Projects.....pg. 5

Witness

Rosanne's Lunch.....pg. 6

Soul Food

Buttermilk Waffles.....pg. 7

Rhythm of Life

Caring for the Caregiver.....pg. 8

Quiet and Calm Your Soul

Finding Time for Prayer.....pg. 9

This Is Your Faith

Mary Mother of God.....pg. 10-11

A heartfelt thanks to our sponsors and benefactors

5ive15ifteen Photo Company - 5ive15ifteen.com - 416-487-0515

Anonymous - Pax Tibi

Anonymous - "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" (Matthew 7:12)

Blauedian Consulting Inc.

Celestina Cappuccitti. PEACE AND ALL GOOD!

Glama Gal Tween Spa- Ultimate Tween to Teen Spa Experience - www.glamagalparty.com

Grace and Vito Natale

Grace and Joe Virone

Halina, Josie, MaryGrace, Pina. Love One Another as I Have Loved You

Heavylifting Crane Service - 416-638-0701

Heidi Kreiner-Ley, Broker, Kreiner Real Estate Ltd. 905-883-5551

Lidia DiBono - Nirvana Beauty Centre - 905-265-9782

Lou Conte - God Bless You

Marin Media Group - 905-660-6655 x243

Nancy Hilliard - Executive Coach Services Inc.

Nino Rico Architect - www.ninorico.com

TEETATEETATEETA inc.

Rivermede Kitchen Designs - 905-669-5296 - www.rivermedekitchens.com

Sr. Carmelina's Preschool Academy - 905-552-1431

St. David's Catholic Women's Society

St. Peters fraternity (come and learn more about us at) www.oftstpeters.com

Waterford Tax & Advisory Inc. www.waterfordta.com - 647-478-7904

DIY Mother's Day Projects

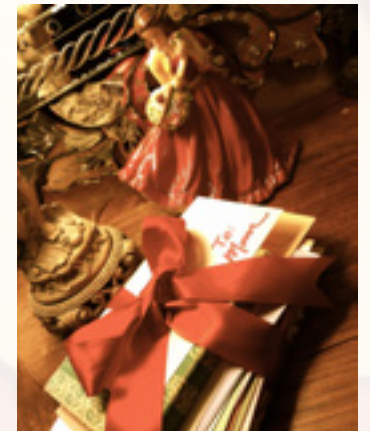
This year, show your appreciation for your mother (or for someone who's like a mother to you) by giving them the gift of your time. Here are some ideas for giving something unique and truly from the heart.

Precious Package for Mom

If you want to make your mother a special personalized gift, why not create a recollection of all of your favourite memories?

Here's How

For every year that your mother has been your mother, write a note, poem, or recall a memory in a letter. Some items that you might consider including are photographs, poems, old cards you have given each other, and artwork from your childhood. This list can go on and on—there really are no rules except to pack the gift full of love! It would also be a great idea to include a prayer to Our Lady for your mother or for whomever is receiving the gift.



Gifts from the Saints

A beautiful gift of faith would be to introduce your mother to a Saint who would provide intercession to our Lord for her intentions.

Here's How

Use a search engine such as Google or Bing, or books on Saints in your local library, to discover your Mom's name Saint or birthday Saint. Gather information about the Saint, such as a short biography, their feast day, and of what they are the patron of. You may also like to include some pictures or fun facts about the Saint, and special prayers for the Saint. Also consider including a note or letter to personalize the gift, such as drawing a connection between your mother's life and the life of her Saint.



A Day for Mom

We all know that we should celebrate our mothers every day, but since the calendar gives us a special day to do so, why not make the most of it?

Here's How

Plan a day that your mother will love from beginning to end! Think of outings that you know she will enjoy, such as a meal at her favourite restaurant, a movie, a museum visit, a show, mass, or getting pampered at a spa. In order to plan the day, truly reflect on what you think your mother would like to do. And make sure that you spend the day together, because that really will be the most treasured part!



Rosanne's Lunch

Rosanne Zeppieri ofs, is a proud Third Order Secular Franciscan. She is a wife and mother and works as a legal assistant.

As a mother, I never thought the day would come when my children would not need me to make their lunches. This past September, my daughters, ages 14 and 18, both began new ventures. One daughter started college, and the other, high school. This, of course, meant many changes, one being that they no longer needed me to make their lunches. I initially thought this was great—no more lunches, snacks, or drinks to prepare! However, although I was relieved at the time, I gradually began to feel an emptiness inside, a yearning to “feed someone.”

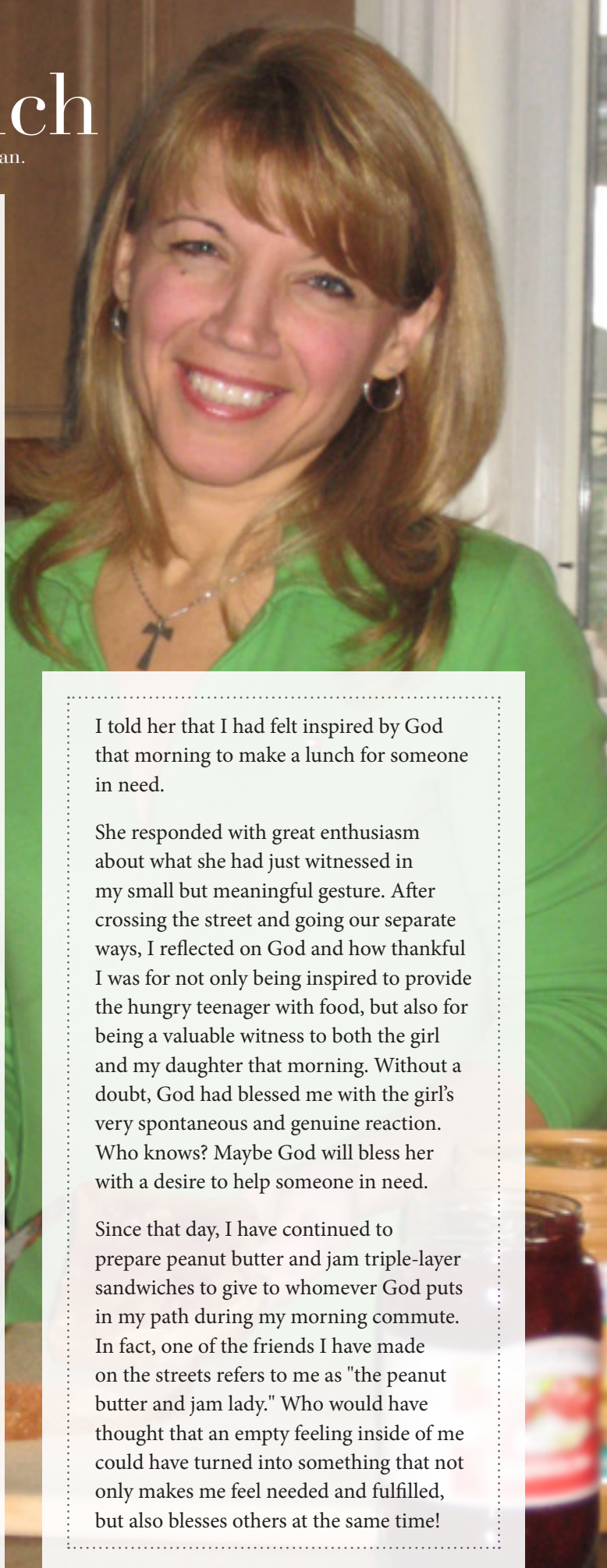
Before heading out for work one morning, a desire came over me to prepare a lunch for someone in need, in particular, a child who may be hungry on the streets. I reached into the refrigerator and pulled out a jar of peanut butter, some jam, and began preparing a triple-layer sandwich. I put the sandwich in a lunch bag and added a juice box, a snack, and a napkin. I did it with as much care as if I was preparing my own children's lunches. One of my daughters happened to walk into the kitchen as I was wrapping up the sandwich and reminded me that she didn't need a lunch. She asked me who the sandwich I was preparing was for, and I told her that I felt the need to provide a lunch for any hungry person God would put in my path that day. She looked at me strangely and said, "Are you kidding me?" I smiled and replied, "No, I am not kidding, and besides, I am on a mission."

Then, following my daily routine, I made my way into the city for work by subway. At my stop, as I made my way out of the subway station, I came across a teenage boy sitting on the ground holding a sign that read "I am hungry." Working in the city, I come across many homeless people. But rarely do I see homeless teenage kids around where I work, so this boy stood out to me. I quickly took the lunch out of my bag and asked him if he would like it. He reached for it and thanked me warmly. At that moment, I heard a voice nearby say, "Wow, that's so awesome!" I turned around and saw a red-haired girl beside me who continued saying how great she thought it was that I had given this teenager a lunch. As I walked away, she walked with me and asked how it happened that I was carrying an extra lunch.

I told her that I had felt inspired by God that morning to make a lunch for someone in need.

She responded with great enthusiasm about what she had just witnessed in my small but meaningful gesture. After crossing the street and going our separate ways, I reflected on God and how thankful I was for not only being inspired to provide the hungry teenager with food, but also for being a valuable witness to both the girl and my daughter that morning. Without a doubt, God had blessed me with the girl's very spontaneous and genuine reaction. Who knows? Maybe God will bless her with a desire to help someone in need.

Since that day, I have continued to prepare peanut butter and jam triple-layer sandwiches to give to whomever God puts in my path during my morning commute. In fact, one of the friends I have made on the streets refers to me as "the peanut butter and jam lady." Who would have thought that an empty feeling inside of me could have turned into something that not only makes me feel needed and fulfilled, but also blesses others at the same time!



Buttermilk Waffles

Chris Crescenzi is a culinary apprentice at Humber College. This Mother's Day he shares his favourite recipe to make for his mom.

Preparation: 20 minutes
Makes: 12 to 16 4-inch waffles

Ingredients:
1¾ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/4 tsp salt
2 egg yolks
2 cups buttermilk
1/2 cup cooking oil
2 egg whites



Preparation:
1) In a medium mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Make a well in the centre of the mixture and set aside.
2) In another medium mixing bowl, beat egg yolks slightly; stir in buttermilk and oil. Add this mixture to the dry ingredients and stir until just moistened (batter should still be lumpy).
3) In a small mixing bowl, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Gently fold beaten egg whites into batter, leaving a few fluffs of egg white. Do not over-mix.
4) Pour desired amount of batter onto preheated, well-greased waffle iron. Close lid immediately and do not open until done according to manufacturer's directions. When done, lift waffles with fork onto plate and continue until all the batter is used. Serve warm (a suggestion for a strawberry sauce to accompany the waffles is below).

***Note:** The amount of batter needed varies according to the model of waffle iron. Always use caution and follow manufacturer's instructions when pouring the batter.

Strawberry Sauce

Preparation: 10 minutes
Makes: 4 to 6 Servings

Ingredients:
2 cups diced strawberries
1 tbsp cornstarch
1/3 cup orange juice
1/4 cup sugar
zest of half an orange

Method:

1) Mix orange juice and cornstarch in a medium saucepan.
2) Add the remaining ingredients and cook over medium heat until liquid has thickened and strawberries have softened, about 6–7 minutes. Remove from heat.
3) Add zest of half an orange.
3) Cool slightly before serving. Sauce may be refrigerated for up to 7 days.





Caring for the Caregiver

As a nurse, it is not uncommon to see a person being admitted to hospital because their caregiver feels they no longer have the energy and support to care for them—we enter “caregiver burnout” as the reason for admission. Caregivers are often heroes—quiet saints that no one ever hears about. They make themselves available to others, sometimes to the detriment of their own physical, psychological, and spiritual health. These special people care for young children, adults and children with disabilities, and people with chronic and terminal illnesses. As the longevity of our population increases along with the focus on more home care versus institutional care, we can expect the issue of caregiver burnout to become more prevalent.

Women are synonymous with caregiving—studies show that women provide the majority of care for frail relatives and young children. Often women are caught in the middle, caring for both young children and older adults at the same time. Their job is unending—there are no breaks, no one to relieve them at three a.m., no pay cheque—and often no one to even tell them they’ve done a good job. This altruism without thought of autonomy can result in negative physical symptoms as well as feelings of anger, frustration, exhaustion, loss of interest, low morale, excessive crying, and a sense of being overwhelmed and without hope. Sometimes caregivers are immobilized by fear—of failure, of people criticizing their care, and of losing things they believe they need for happiness, such as career aspirations and money.

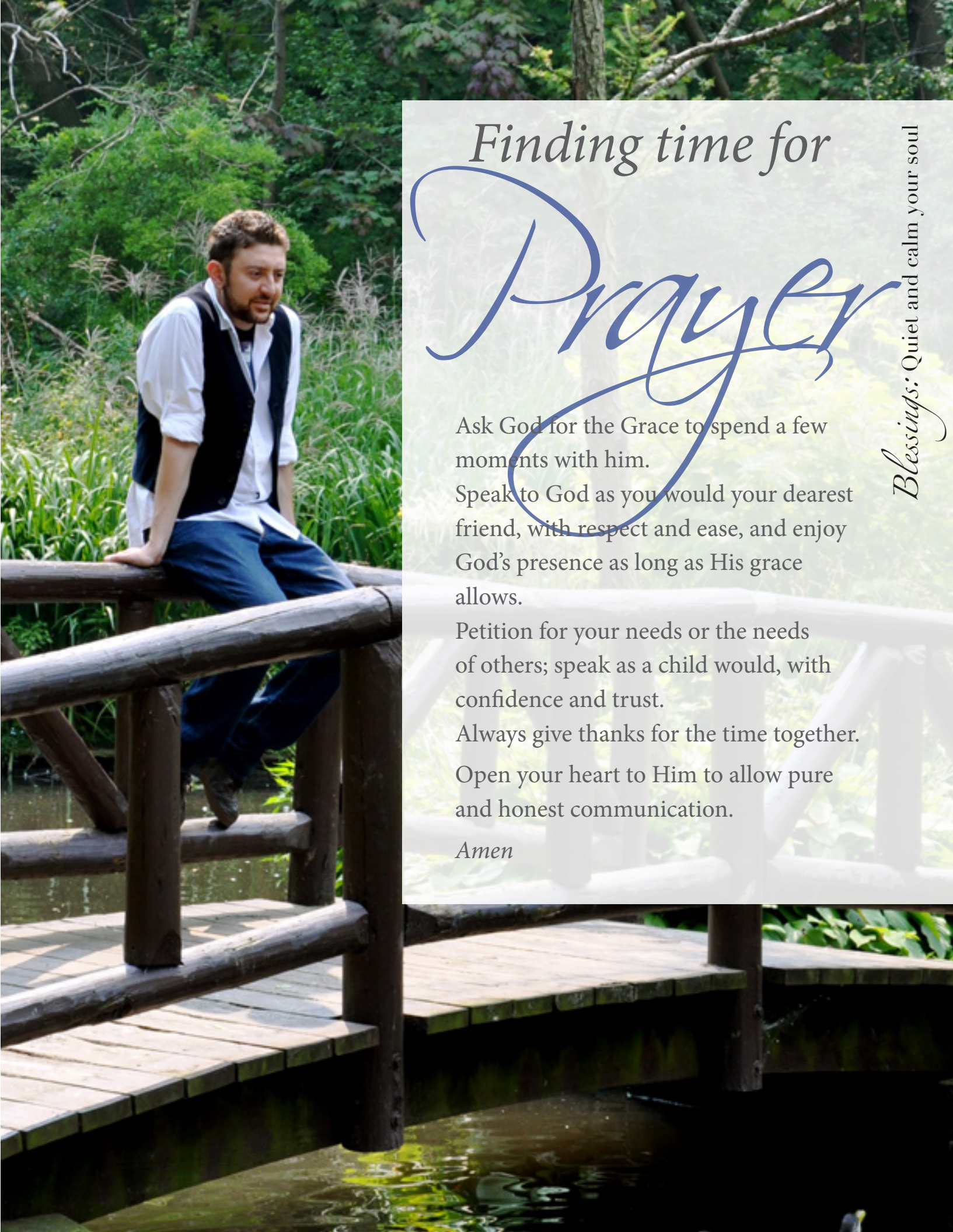
Caregivers need to recognize that sometimes burnout isn’t caused by the amount of work as much as by the

way we view the work we are doing. As Catholics, we are members of a Church rich in resources that can support and nourish us spiritually during our difficult times. Through the sacraments, scripture readings, and teachings of the church, we are taught that everything we do can be for the glory of God—even our suffering. Hope is found in John Paul II’s *Salvifici Doloris*, his apostolic letter on the Christian meaning of suffering. There he says: “... it has been seen that in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace.” He explains that Jesus shows us that suffering is conquered by love, and that at the side of a suffering Christ was always his mother, Mary. She is our example of “unshakeable” faith.

Through meditation and reflection, God’s word can bring food for our soul and give us guidance and support in order to find fulfilment in life. In the words of St. Paul, “... we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit...” (1 Cor 2:13). With a listening spirit we find the key to living a Christ-filled life of gratitude and simplicity that helps us to see our lives clearly and to maintain perspective. The answer is sometimes very simple—let go of our burdens and what limits us and give them to Christ: “Let all that you do be done in love.” (1 Cor 16:14) and “...whatever you do, in work or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col 3:17).

With gratitude, simplicity, and a listening spirit, we can nourish our spiritual needs, thereby enabling us to meet the needs of others.

Francisca Burg-Feret ofs, is the Executive Director of Silent Children’s Mission. She is a nursing educator with a specialty in mother/baby nursing.



Finding time for Prayer

Ask God for the Grace to spend a few moments with him.
Speak to God as you would your dearest friend, with respect and ease, and enjoy God’s presence as long as His grace allows.
Petition for your needs or the needs of others; speak as a child would, with confidence and trust.
Always give thanks for the time together.
Open your heart to Him to allow pure and honest communication.

Amen

Mary Mother of God



Father Michael Della Penna

A mother’s love is a precious treasure of immeasurable blessings. What else can better soothe our deepest hurts, enlighten our darkest hours, or more readily console our troubled hearts? What else carries such peace, warmth, and healing, or helps us feel the tender and gentle touch of God, as our mother’s love? Perhaps Louis de Montfort spoke of Mary as the royal way to Christ precisely because it seems so natural and easy to experience the presence of God in the caring love of a mother—especially Mary, who was the first and only perfect disciple.

In describing Mary, who has always been a paragon of virtue for all Christians, Sts Anselm and Aquinas wrote that she touches the very borders of divinity, and that there is nothing greater than Mary except God. She not only taught Jesus himself, but her greatest desire is to lead us to her Son. And since God himself chose to come to us through Mary, why would we choose any other means to come to Him? After all, who would know a son better than his mother, she who for nine months was physically one with Him, gave birth to Him, and nursed Him with the milk from her breasts? Every aspect of Mary’s intimate relationship with her son is a model of loving for all Christians to meditate. In fact, Blessed John Paul II encouraged Christians to sit in “the school of Mary and be led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.” Who else but Mary our mother can teach us to love him better?

And just what is the greatest lesson in this school of Mary? One might argue that it is her privileged maternal unity with Christ that holds the greatest blessings. How so? St Francis of Assisi shows us the way. Among all her virtues that we are called to imitate, her purity and humility are often lauded as perhaps the most admirable and profound. In one of St Francis’ prayers to Mary, he writes:

Hail, O Lady,
holy Queen,
Mary, holy Mother of God:
you are the virgin made church.

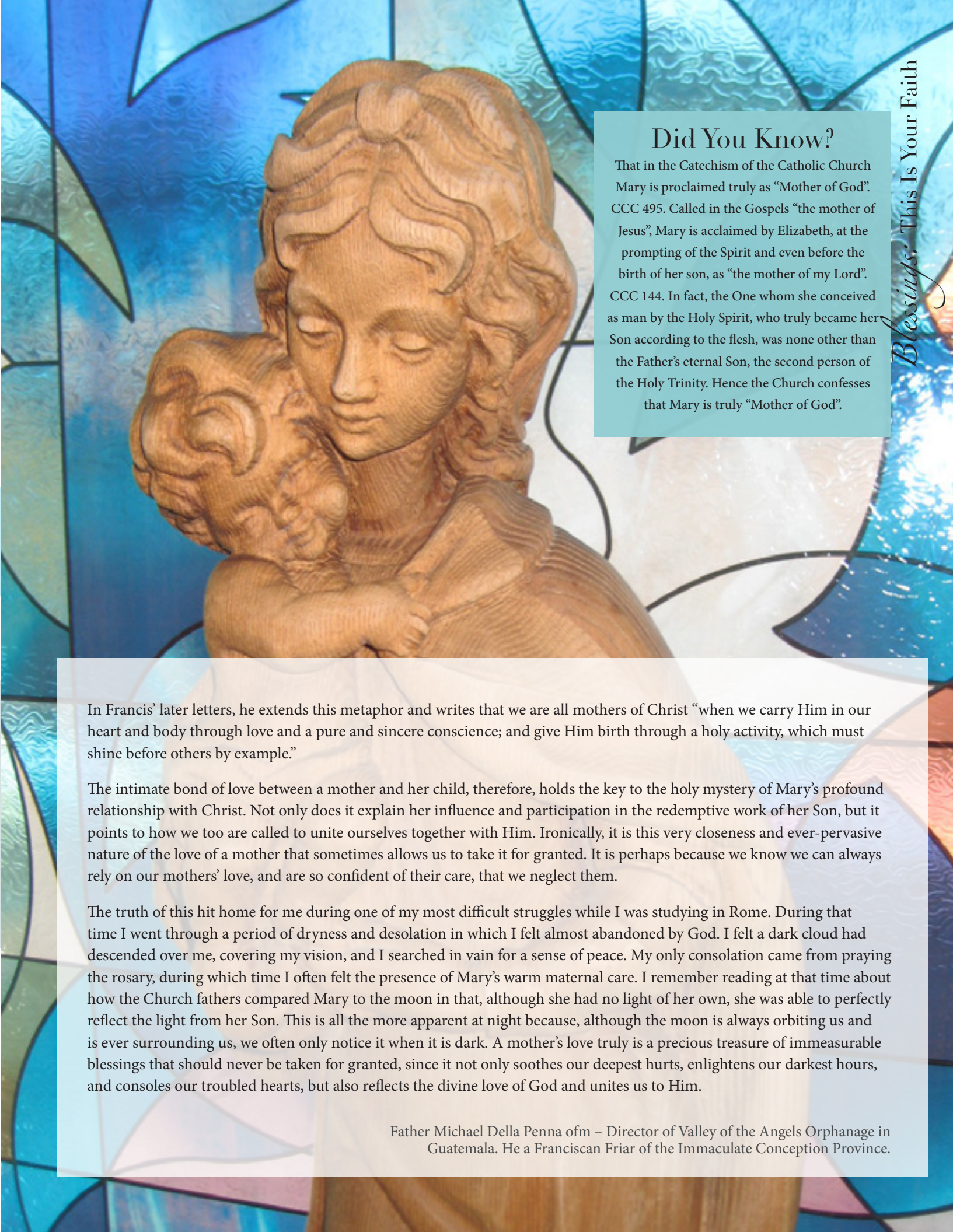
The immaculate heart of the Virgin Mary was made church in the sense that her virginity, her radical openness to God, produced a spiritual fruitfulness in which she is able to give birth to spiritual sons and daughters. Because Mary recognized herself as a lowly maid-servant and emptied herself for God, she was able to be filled with infinite Grace. This idea of becoming vacare Deo, or “empty for God,” was a medieval way of recognizing the immense mystery of how God, whom the entire universe could not contain, chose to be contained within the womb of the Virgin Mary. Humility, then, was the first step in fashioning herself as a sacred place for God to dwell. In the kenotic act of pouring out her very self and shedding her ego, pride, selfishness, and vanity, Mary was preparing the pure and fertile soil in which the seed of God’s Word would be planted.

In the same way, imitating her humility and purity means first being radically emptied in order to become radically available and docile to the will of God. Only in this way can we hope to be fecund vessels of God as well. A mother’s womb is quintessentially the sacred place in which God grants life to be conceived and the gift of co-creation to occur. Spiritually speaking, we too can empty ourselves and become a holy space in which Christ may dwell, thus becoming living tabernacles. St Francis’ following lines confirm this vision:

Hail, His Palace!
Hail, His Tabernacle!
Hail, His Home!

Did You Know?

That in the Catechism of the Catholic Church Mary is proclaimed truly as “Mother of God”. CCC 495. Called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus”, Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as “the mother of my Lord”. CCC 144. In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly “Mother of God”.



In Francis’ later letters, he extends this metaphor and writes that we are all mothers of Christ “when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example.”

The intimate bond of love between a mother and her child, therefore, holds the key to the holy mystery of Mary’s profound relationship with Christ. Not only does it explain her influence and participation in the redemptive work of her Son, but it points to how we too are called to unite ourselves together with Him. Ironically, it is this very closeness and ever-pervasive nature of the love of a mother that sometimes allows us to take it for granted. It is perhaps because we know we can always rely on our mothers’ love, and are so confident of their care, that we neglect them.

The truth of this hit home for me during one of my most difficult struggles while I was studying in Rome. During that time I went through a period of dryness and desolation in which I felt almost abandoned by God. I felt a dark cloud had descended over me, covering my vision, and I searched in vain for a sense of peace. My only consolation came from praying the rosary, during which time I often felt the presence of Mary’s warm maternal care. I remember reading at that time about how the Church fathers compared Mary to the moon in that, although she had no light of her own, she was able to perfectly reflect the light from her Son. This is all the more apparent at night because, although the moon is always orbiting us and is ever surrounding us, we often only notice it when it is dark. A mother’s love truly is a precious treasure of immeasurable blessings that should never be taken for granted, since it not only soothes our deepest hurts, enlightens our darkest hours, and consoles our troubled hearts, but also reflects the divine love of God and unites us to Him.

Father Michael Della Penna ofm – Director of Valley of the Angels Orphanage in Guatemala. He a Franciscan Friar of the Immaculate Conception Province.

He said to them,

“GO into *all* the
world and *preach*
the gospel to all
creation.”

Mark 16:15

