

# “Mother of God, Mother of Mine”

**N**O!!!” His little fists balled up, pushing Craig away. He was only two – far too young to take care of himself – and yet Christopher made it abundantly clear that he wanted to be left alone. He did not want us. In particular, he did not want my husband; the toddler had been hurt before, and he was not going to take any chances with strangers.

Christopher was with us nearly four months before the situation changed, thanks to my husband’s patient, fatherly love. He would sit on the sofa with a treat in a small bowl next to him – Cheetos, perhaps, or popcorn. As my husband enjoyed the snack, Christopher watched his every move from under a nearby table. Gradually the toddler inched toward the gentle giant. Finally, Craig held out a

palmful to the little boy, who would swipe a kernel or two and run back to his hangout as fast as his chubby little legs would carry him. Soon Christopher grew brave enough to sit beside my husband and eat out of the same bowl (so long as Craig didn’t try to touch him).

When my husband discovered the little boy’s love of dinosaurs, he tried a new game. “Hey, Christopher, let’s play dinosaurs!” he’d say, dropping down on all fours and doing his best T-Rex impression.

“Daddy Monster!” Christopher’s big sister (who was also living with us at that time) would shriek with glee. Craig would gallop around the room until she “caught” the dinosaur and leaped on his back. Finally Christopher wouldn’t be able to resist the fun, and soon Craig was carrying them both around the room. They had caught their dinosaur ... and he had won their hearts.

## Queen of Hearts

On January 1 we celebrate the solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. Like most mothers, Mary took up her vocation with great faith, not fully understanding what the task would entail. Only gradually did she come to realize the full extent of what would be required of her, from the scratchy straw of the stable in Bethlehem to the agonizing death watch beneath the Cross ... at which time she took up her mantle of spiritual maternity on behalf of the whole Church.

When I started my journey toward the fullness of the Catholic faith, I found it

difficult to accept Mary’s maternity. I understood that she was Jesus’ mother, but resisted the idea that this had anything to do with me.

Furthermore, I found it shocking to think that a faithful Christian might pray to anyone other than God ... even His mother. I had not yet fully grasped what the Church has always taught about the “communion of saints,” that we are forever connected to the whole Body of Christ in a way that not even death can separate.

It wasn’t until the children came to live with us that I realized how I had been “parented” by Mary during this time of my life. Although he had no “natural” bond with the children, my husband had slowly earned their trust by finding ways to meet their need for fatherly affection. In much the same way, Mary reached out to me – a child who was fearful and resistant to her expressions of maternal love – by finding ways to meet my needs, often in unexpected ways.

## Mother Mary

I first experienced Mary’s maternal concern a few years after my conversion, when a romantic break-up resulted in feelings of loneliness, especially at Mass each week (my friend and I had always gone to Mass together). A friend suggested that I “tell Mary about it,” and gave me a Miraculous Medal. Three weeks in a row I asked for someone to sit beside me in church ... and three weeks in a row, a different stranger found my pew.

When I became a mother, I found Mary’s name on my lips more and more



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frequently. I write about this in my new book *Raising Up Mommy: Virtues for Difficult Mothering Moments* (see ordering information below). When I felt particularly inept or frustrated, I sent a little S.O.S. heavenward: "You had one perfect Son, Mary, but my children are driving me crazy! You are a perfect mother ... I am not. Pray for me, that I might find the patience I need to get through the day."

One day as I was driving the children home from an agency visit, I was pondering the talk I was to give the following week about Mary. As I drove, a thought passed through my head: *I wish I had a new story, one that wasn't in the book.*

At that moment, a large gravel truck that was passing on my right hit a large bump, sending a shower of gravel onto my car and all over the road. Cars swerved, horns blared, and the children screamed. I clenched the wheel and cried out, "Help me!"

The next thing I knew, we were parked at the side of the road, fifty yards away from the mess behind us. Five or six cars – along with the gravel truck – had piled into one another. But we were not among them. I breathed a quick prayer of thanks, quieted the kids, and slowly made my way home. When we arrived I looked the van over, and found only one small scratch in the paint.

In telling this story, I do not mean to suggest that an off-the-cuff "wish" like the one I had that day will miraculously spare anyone from all pain or hardship. That's not how God operates ... not even when Our Lady intercedes. And yet, I believe that the person who sincerely reaches out for the motherly ministrations of the Mother of God – particularly those who are trying to overcome a lifetime of prejudice and doubt – will find in her an unexpected source of comfort.

The reason for this is simple: Like any good adoptive parent, Mary waits until her

children want her attention – until they make a move toward her – to shower her love down upon them. And like any good father, God does whatever He can to lend the mother of His children a hand.



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*are the adoptive parents of two children. Order Heidi's new book Raising Up Mommy: Virtues for Difficult Mothering Moments or a copy of "Mary: The Feminine Ideal," (Program #395) by calling (800) 558-5452.*



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