

# 'Faith Magnets'-A Mother's Day Sermon

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*'How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?' Jn 7:15*

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In today's Bible reading, those listening to Jesus are amazed that he speaks with such wisdom, truth and grace, even though he has had no formal education. We shouldn't be surprised at this however, as many of the greatest believers in the Bible-and perhaps also in our own family-have exuded great wisdom and faith with little formal education. The fact that some of the least formally educated are among the wisest and most faithful supports a favorite saying of mine about the spiritual life, that faith in Christ and devotion to his church is *caught* and not *taught*. That is, faith is not primarily something learned from a book about Christianity, but learned from a person who is a Christian. And as in every other aspect of our formation as persons, so also in the spiritual life, the primary example by which we catch on to our Christian faith is our Mother's example.

It is very easy to downplay the influence a mother has on the spiritual well-being of her children, for much of what she does is absolutely not glamorous. It's not in the least bit glamorous to deal with a fussy 18-month-old who doesn't nap, or engage with the incessant chatter of small children. It's not glamorous to spend half the day picking up after children. And because of this humble nature of motherhood, we can easily take mothers for granted. Once a teacher gave her class of second-graders a lesson about the magnet and what it does. The next day, in a written test, she included this question: "My name has six letters. The first one is 'm.' I pick up things. What am I?" When the tests were turned in, the teacher was surprised to find that 50 percent of the students answered the question with the word "mother."

Yes, mothers do pick up things. In our house, it's a never ending picking up of crayons, cars, books and star wars action figures. But moms are much more than "magnets," gathering up clothes and picking up toys around the house. They are called to be spiritual magnets which "catch up" children in their example, so that our children can be caught and not taught faithfulness and selfless service. Godly mothers have a calling to not only raise you up, but raise you up to God, and today on Mother's Day and the fifth week of Easter, we recognize and celebrate this special calling.

I'm sure it is similar for all of you, but I've been amazed at the impact that Yn. Anna has had on Narek. These things are subtle and hard to measure, but good mothers provide an atmosphere where kids can find acceptance, security, and understanding. She is there for a listening ear, a comforting word or a warm hug. And very few roles demand the kind of unconditional, self-sacrificing perseverance and commitment as that of motherhood. That is how, I think, that good motherhood, in very humble ways, is a sacred partnership with God. Only Moms are given the sacred power to bring life into the world. Only Moms are given such central roles in forming that life.

With such sacred responsibility, and such incessant demands to put others' needs before her own, Moms need help. First and foremost, our mothers need God's continual guiding presence. They need to be caught up daily in the life of Christ and his unconditional, self-sacrificing love so that their children will be caught by the same ultimate trust and peace. Let us help our young mom's to grow stronger in their faith so that their children will grow beneath them. And secondly, our mothers need to hear from us fathers, husbands, grandfathers and brothers-and not just on mother's day-that their daily invisible sacrifice is not just drudgery, but rather a high-calling to usher in the kingdom of God, to raise a new generation that is inching closer to life as God intended it.

Let us therefore remember on Mother's Day that church and faith are caught more than taught, and our mothers are the main example by which our kids catch their faith. May we appreciate their daily acts of compassion and self-sacrifice which reflect God's very nature, and assist them in the awesome responsibility of helping to raise children up to God. In doing this, may the world marvel at our children as they marveled at our Lord, wondering how they could grow up with such wisdom, truth and grace, taught only by the example of a Godly mother and father; now and always; amen.