

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

Mother's Day

On this day when we celebrate Mothers, I found myself thinking about my relationship with my mother, and how my experience with her profoundly affected my religious beliefs. How, nestled under our mother's heartbeat, we grow and develop in her womb until we are born and can start living on our own. How we begin life in total trust, completely dependent on our mother's care. It is a classic image of care and trust, a mother holding her child and providing warmth and milk.

However, as we all know, when we grow, we begin to challenge that complete trust ... we begin to rebel. I certainly remember challenging that trust in my parents most of my life. I wanted to do things my way. It was a war of wills between my mother and me which only changed after my mother was diagnosed with cancer.

I stayed with her during the last months of her life. Our roles were reversed. I was the mother and she needed to trust me, and she did. She depended on my getting her to doctors' appointments, providing her food, bathing her, filing her finger nails and rubbing her back before I helped her into bed. It was that care and the personal touches that bonded us again.

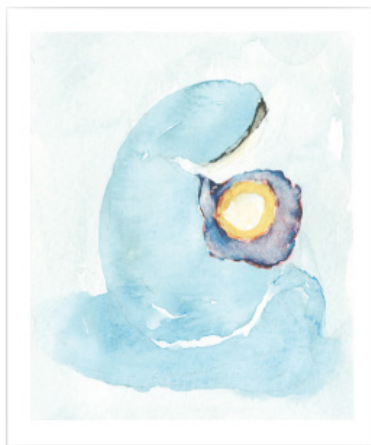
At one point during this time that I was caring for her, I asked her, more out of my curiosity rather than as any test of faith, "Do you believe in eternal life?" She said, "I don't know." I was surprised. I thought she would say, "Yes," especially since we both knew death was coming to her very soon.

Then I realized that it was not my mother who was concerned about eternal life. It was me. I was the one that wanted assurance about the resurrection and eternal life. I desperately wanted eternal life for my mother, but I also desperately wanted it for myself. I realized that up to this point in my life, my belief in the resurrection and eternal life had been theoretical. Now my need to believe was immediate and real.

The song writer and poet Leonard Cohen wrote a song called "Anthem" that described how sometimes things in our lives crack and that those cracks are necessary because they allow new light in. He writes:

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

I realized that my mother's response to my question about eternal life was the "crack" for me that let the light of truth into my own life and gave me conviction in the truth of eternal life and the resurrection.



Artwork by Liz Picken, CJ

This brings us to the Gospel reading for Mother's Day from (JN 14:1-12). In John's gospel, Jesus comforts and assures his disciples that he will die soon, but they must not be troubled for he is coming back and will "take you to myself." Jesus is fearless in the face of death because he believes in his life with God. Jesus opens a crack in the disciple's belief that death is final and they will be abandoned. Through this crack they can now see new light and the promise of eternal life.

These cracks in our beliefs call forth a deeper trust in our faith from us. Will we let the light of truth and life in? The disciples believed the light of truth when Jesus appeared on Easter morning. For me, the light of belief in resurrection came as I cared for my mother in her final days. We did not talk about the question of eternal life again, but she taught me the truth of eternal life by her peace as she approached death, and her quiet conviction that she was ready. Each night I prayed her favorite Psalm 27 with her: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

It is indeed true that we begin life trusting in our mothers as we rest in their arms. And it is also true that we are called to trust again at the end of our lives as we rest in the arms of Jesus for our transition to eternal life.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at: <http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

Sr. Laura and Sisters

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