

# A Spring Song of Thanksgiving for Mothers

*Fr. Dean McFalls, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Lathrop*

May is such a beautiful month. Chilly nights give way to tropic afternoons, the sound of returning birds fills the pollinated air, roses explode open with fragrant colors, and noses grow intensely orange with the annual epidemic of allergies. Frogs and salamanders congregate in the wet spots of our property. Youth walk by in pairs, stealing roses, while the trees glow bright with lime green leaves. It's a great time to be outdoors. It's a great time to be alive.

May is *my* month, and my birth stone is emerald. Growing up in Seattle, the Emerald City, I weathered the winters, waiting for spring like a devout evangelical awaits the return of Christ. One day – I distinctly remember it – I stood outside beneath our huge Blue Spruce. For the first time that year, the grass had grown enough to need cutting. Mother and I were talking over an antique manual lawn-mower (such as we older folks used to use in the era of JFK, of five-cent stamps and *I Love Lucy*). In the midst of the bone-chilling frostiness of that February day, I felt a gently reassuring caress. It was a warm breeze, as if someone had just driven by or lit a nearby barbeque.

“What was that?” I ask my mom. “That,” she replied, “Is Spring”. And sure enough, she was right. Within a few days, little crocuses flowered up from beneath the crusted soil, and familiar birds returned to settle in the branches.

Yet as sure as the Kennedy's died, and five-cent stamps got more expensive, and as the Queen of Comedy went on herself to become a postage stamp, the frosts of February would return to kill the early blooms and any premature blossoms. March and April, though increasingly optimistic, were notoriously unstable. But by May, my month and the month of mothers, Spring was a certainty. There was security, blessed assurance, and the additional joy that, within just a few weeks, we'd run free and barefoot for our summer vacation.

In the last days of April, 2007, I buried four mothers. They ranged in age from nineteen to eighty-eight. By May Day, I was thanking God more than ever for taking such good care of *my* mother. She, on March 23, turned 79.

Mom was and remains a saint. Not one to talk much about religion, she put into practice the Christian faith that gave strength to her otherwise shy and self-effacing temperament. As May returns to California, memories of mom in Seattle flood in – lugging around five feisty kids, cooking over a campfire, voting at the local polls, organizing our Saturday work patrol, bringing us all to church, helping us with our homework, bandaging our many injuries, attending our school assemblies, running the PTA meetings, listening to our complaints, making my Halloween costume and trying to fix our broken toys.

May the Good Lord bless all of our mothers. Not all have the good fortune of seeing their children's children. Not all fully enjoy the miracle of birthing and raising up babies in their own image, but all mothers share in the sacred original blessing of being givers of new life. My prayer is that they – that *you mothers* – be worthy of receiving the praises found in Proverbs 31:

*“When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize...She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come. She opens her mouth in wisdom, and on her tongue is kindly counsel. She watches the conduct of her household...her children rise up and praise her; her husband, too extols her: ‘Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all.’ Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward of her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.”* (The last verses of Proverbs, 31:10, 25-31)

As for all the many mothers who feel their sacrifices go unappreciated, be of good cheer: Jesus sees everything and knows your heart. After all, his own mother had to endure a lot of misunderstanding, and for 500 years has been putting up with plenty of bad press. But time tells all. One day you, too, will exchange your broom for a scepter, and your ragged mop for a golden crown.

# *Happy Mothers' Day!*

*May 3, 2007, by Fr. Dean McFalls, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Lathrop.*