

“We are sitting at lunch,” says this reflection from an anonymous mom, “when my daughter casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of ‘starting a family.’ ‘We’re taking a survey,’ she says half-joking. ‘Do you think I should have a baby?’ ‘It will change your life,’ I say, carefully keeping my tone neutral. “‘I know,’ she says, ‘no more sleeping in on weekends, no more spontaneous vacations ....’”

“But that is not what I meant at all. I look at my daughter, trying to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes. I want to tell her that the physical wounds of childbearing will heal, but that becoming a mother will leave her with an emotional wound so raw that she will forever be vulnerable. .... she will never again read a newspaper without asking ‘What if that had been MY child?’ ... every plane crash, every house fire will haunt her. ... when she sees pictures of starving children, she will wonder if anything could be worse than watching your child die. I look at her ... manicured nails and stylish suit and think no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a bear protecting her cub.... I feel I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. She might arrange for child care, but one day she will get going to a business meeting and think of her baby’s sweet smell...and it will take every ounce of ((will not to run home and make sure)) her baby is all right.

“I want my daughter to know that everyday decisions will no longer be routine. That a five year old boy’s desire to go to the men’s room rather than the women’s at McDonald’s will become a major dilemma. That right there, in the midst of clattering trays and screaming children, issues of independence and gender identity will be weighed against the prospect that a child molester might be lurking in that restroom. However decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother.

“Looking at my attractive daughter, I want to assure her that eventually she ((may)) shed the pounds of pregnancy, but she will never feel the same about herself. That her life, now so important, will be of less value to her once she has a child. That she would give it up in a moment to save her offspring, but will also begin to hope for more years --- not to accomplish her dreams, but to watch her child accomplish theirs.

“My daughter’s relationship with her husband will change, but not in the way she thinks. I wish she could understand how much more you can love a man who is careful to powder the baby or who never hesitates to play with his child. I think she should know that she will fall in love with him again for reasons she would not find very unromantic.

“I wish my daughter could sense the bond she will feel with women throughout history who have tried to stop war, prejudice and drunk driving.... I want to describe to my daughter the exhilaration of seeing your child learn to ride a bike. I want to capture for her the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the soft fur of a dog or a cat for the first time. I want her to taste the joy that is so real it actually hurts. My daughter’s quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes.” (*Dyn. Preaching, XXV, 42-3*)

Not everybody in this fallen world has the blessing of a good mother. But if the umbilical cord connecting you to your mother was weak or not at all, take special heart from Jesus' divine proclamation. "I am the vine, coming from the rich soil of the Father to nurture the branches. I am God's umbilical cord stretched out. Without me you wither. Which is why I give my life for you in an instant. I stretch out to every living thing. Touch yourself, at your center, and know, unless you prevent it, that my life is flowing into you right now. Every created love in the universe, including mother's love, is a reflection and participation in the uncreated love coming from God through me.