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Mother's Day

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Mothers' Day

Though there is a Fathers' Day as well as a Mothers' Day in the calendars, the commitment of mothers in carrying children to birth seems especially worthy of gracious recognition, not only for the sake of those who are mothers, but for all of us who were born. The fact of our birth is ordinary, but that each of us has come into life is uniquely extraordinary. We owe thanks to our mothers, but also to the God of all creation for our personal gift of being who we are. Although we have actively participated in our education, learning and growing, we neither gave ourselves birth nor arranged for a universe, world and humanity into which we would be born. All is gift, including our part in becoming who we are and will be.

On occasions of birthdays, anniversaries and similar events, we might want to "make someone's day," usually by conveying our care, respect or love for him or her. But if the occasion is sad or painful, such as sickness, death or other loss, we do our best to console and express our compassion, but we would rarely imagine that by so doing, we could "make someone's day." In his book, *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola proposes an imaginative exercise of the unique Mother's Day of all time: Jesus, whose suffering and death by crucifixion were witnessed by his mother, rises from the dead, and appears to his mother as wholly and completely alive and glorious. What a loving way to make her day: visibly manifesting his total victory over suffering and death.

The connection between the consolation that Jesus provided for his mother and the very real effects of our caring presence to others in times of celebration or instances of compassion might not be immediately evident, but the intent is the same. When Jesus came to his mother, he did so primarily for her sake, not his own. Whenever we do anything for others, such as offering Mothers' Day greetings, calling friends or relatives when one of them comes to mind, or spending time with someone who does not have many visitors, we, like Jesus, have their best interests at heart, not ours. In all these and similar situations, our love is the essential and invaluable gift that we bring to such encounters.

If we reflect on our seemingly ordinary thoughts and actions which manifest our kindness or any other aspect of love, we might recognize that more takes place than whatever we generate from within ourselves. Without any tangible contact, we might sense that God has been and is a partner with us, not an observer. Or we might notice that we first received personal movements within us of loving inspiration that in turn encouraged us to think and act graciously to others. We learn from our experience that our

love, like God's, has to expand outward, occasionally even to those we might never have considered as possible recipients.

In a larger perspective, all of us who have been loved by parents, mentors, teachers, friends, care-givers or others are, by that same expansive movement drawn into roles of caring for others. God "mothers" us as well as "fathers" us with love, and so we are empowered to do the same, no matter what our titles, positions, and careers might be.

We might not know whether or not we "make someone's day," but it is always within our potential to love, because we are loved.