"ALL I AM, OR EVER HOPE TO BE, I OWE TO MY ANGEL MOTHER"

Good Afternoon to you and to each of my esteemed listeners! Welcome to EWTN's Open Line Tuesday edition! Barbara McGuigan here, alive and grateful to be your host each Tuesday and each Saturday on The Good Fight! I find myself saying, "If you're blessed enough to be a radio host, you're blessed enough!"

Could we not apply that same statement to mothers? "If you're blessed enough to have a good mother, you are blessed enough!" God's airwaves are open. Here are the numbers to call:

In North America call 1-800-585-9396

Outside North America call 1-205-271-2985

Our email address is always Openline@ewtn.com.

My dear brothers and sisters, never mind the sad fact that many in today's world see motherhood as something to avoid like a bad case of the flu. Mother's Day is coming soon – next Sunday, to be exact! I already have a couple of presents so far for my magnanimous Mother... one is a beautiful glass candle engraved with Abraham Lincoln's words:

ALL I AM, OR EVER HOPE TO BE, I OWE TO MY ANGEL MOTHER

How blessed my entire family is to have such a precious Mother! She jumped into her role as Mother with her usual sweetness, joy and patience; a requirement for any exemplary mother but possibly even more so as the mother of many – 11, to be exact. Actually, I thought all mothers were like mine: happy to be moms. Today, it is a struggle for many young women.

I've been wanting to share an excellent article that I've been saving since last year. I found it last October 16 on InsideCatholic.com. It's called "Hands to Heaven" and it's by Marion Fernandez-Cueto. Our writer begins by giving a line in Scripture that she said,

> **…has always infuriated me. It's Timothy 2:15, and for years I could not read it without wanting to hurl my Bible at the wall. "The woman," writes St. Paul, "will be saved by childbearing, if only she continue with faith, love and holiness." Its baptized misogyny was insulting enough (how typical to posit a woman's salvation within her social confines of barefoot, pregnant servitude), yet beneath it lurked a more devastating injury: the idea that a woman's sanctity was tied up in motherhood. That spelled damnation for**

me, I thought, for the drudgery of childbearing was the last thing I aspired to.

The author continues to explain how she,

…fell in love with a man who wanted kids the way former boyfriends had dreamed of plasma TVs. As he wooed and pursued me, I realized it was not motherhood per se I had long feared and mocked; it was the utter dying to self that motherhood entails. My individualism and selfishness were alive and well, fostered by nearly a decade of independence, during which my time, decisions, money, plans, and body had remained solely my own...

But St. John writes that perfect love casts out fear, and it is true, even of flawed love like ours: A year after our wedding, we found ourselves praying I might get pregnant. Two days later, I did. To say I was ecstatic would be a lie -- I hadn't expected an answer to arrive overnight express. But we were awed at this new life God and our union had wrought...

My pregnancy proceeded in a happy glow... I found myself dreaming of long-scorned domestic scenes, a tangle of jolly siblings for our son, and a kitchen fragrant with hot meals and teasing affection. Finally, I thought, I was ready to be a mother.

Then Dominic was born. I still remember my feeling of incredulity when the hospital night nurse first woke me to feed him, seemingly minutes after a searing labor. I looked at the clock – 2:20 a.m. – then at my mewling, scrunchy little baby and knew like Napoleon at Waterloo that the end had come -- the end of life as I knew and liked it. This child, this responsibility, was mine for the rest of my life.

I felt a tidal wave of resentment that God had allowed me to welcome pregnancy while providing barely a shred of fuzzy maternal instinct beyond delivery... I felt blindsided and betrayed. Where was the grace that had flooded the previous nine months?... I'm a wretched mother already, I thought. Poor, innocent, ill-fated Dominic. Somewhere I'd assumed that if only I prayed hard enough for grace when I accepted pregnancy, a good mother would be born with my son... Prayers are not magic spells, and none would instantly transform my long-fostered habit of selfishness into a spirit of enthusiastic self-sacrifice. Instead, over the next weeks and months, a loving Savior would ask me to take up my cross and learn to follow Him...

Meanwhile, Dominic didn't know he was poor and ill-fated...When he napped on our bed, flushed with sweet sleep, I would lie beside him and murmur my undying love into his damp blond curls...

Yet, through it all, I rebelled. A voice in my head echoed the old cry of Lucifer: *non serviam* – I will not serve. "You're too good for this," said the voice. "You were made for better things – not the endless, mind-numbing tedium of diapers and dishes and laundry. Where is the glamour, the intellectual stimulation, the chances and promotions you still deserve? Is this really what God intended for you?"

The voice would resume each morning as I watched the army of lawyers and interns swinging down 16th Street with their lattes and briefcases and careers. Each smartly dressed young woman, luxuriating in her phone conversation or iPod, represented a life I couldn't have anymore, opportunities and experiences that would never be mine. "You see?" the voice would prod. "You see?"...

I reached my breaking point one afternoon while walking with Dominic past St. Matthew's Cathedral. A panhandler took a long look at my stroller and its sleeping cargo and inexplicably dragged a condom out of his pocket. "If you'd used one of these, "he leered, "you wouldn't have had *him*. " Shaken, I knew the man had articulated the very thought that had risen like a demonic specter on more than one sleep-deprived night...

Sick with shame, I sought out a priest in confession... he asked me to name what I would rather be doing. "Let's say you can leave your family, your responsibilities. What do you want?"…

"I want to see the rest of the world. I want to be the foreign correspondent I trained to be. I want to take my morning coffee in silence, to read the paper uninterrupted. I want to sleep until noon on Saturdays...I want my time, my space, my schedule, my plans, my peace, my quiet...I want me again. I just want me."

"All of us want that," he said softly. But serving ourselves, living for ourselves...what does the Gospel say about that? 'He who seeks to save his life, will lose it.' Unless the grain of wheat falls in the earth...' We *know* we can't find happiness that way."

"Try me," I thought darkly.

My brothers and sisters, as God would have it, our author Marion Fernandez-Cueto's friend Veronique, a "single, gorgeous, multilingual painter" living the high life that Marion so craved, flew into town one day. Expecting a deliriously happy friend, our author instead witnessed a miserable young woman. Marion writes:

Veronique seemed haunted by a stirring realization that years of self-direction, self-discovery and self-fulfillment (all so greedily panted after by me) had brought her not nirvana, but only herself – a self she was starting to

find unbearable... As she watched me wipe applesauce off Dominic's chin...her eyes reflected not pity but raw, naked wishing. And her next words startled me further. "I wish I had someone to love and give myself to like that," she said. "Sometimes I'm afraid my heart is going to shrivel up."

I expected to feel relief at Veronique's woe...but instead I felt only wonder and the spreading epiphany that mothering – that vocation I wore like a penitent's hair shirt – had spared me the tyranny, the terrible poverty, of my unconstrained will. As I glimpsed the bleakness in Veronique's life, I realized I never could have borne the curse I had craved so long – that of gaining the whole world, only to lose my soul. In His all-seeing mercy, God had eliminated for me the option of exclusive self-service when I bore Dominic. As a wife and mother, my heart might bleed, but I knew it would never shrivel, pumped full as it was with the occupational hazards of delight and terror, grief and compassion. When Veronique left, I clutched my son to my breast and wept with gratitude.

Henry Ward Beecher once wrote that children are the hands by which we take hold of Heaven... I see [this] is simply a more palatable version of Timothy 2:15. Through Veronique I realized that what I once called heaven – all that came from my own stubborn choosing – was the quintessence of hell itself. Only children could roll away the stone from the grave of self in which I lay and offer my soul rebirth.

Though I mostly struggle and stagger in my vocation as mother, I do so rejoicing, knowing that God will hold me through it, if only I continue with faith, love and holiness. *This* woman, at least, will be saved by childbearing.

Brothers and sisters, I welcome your comments and questions. Here are the numbers: 1-800-585-9396 and 1-205-271-2985.

Closing: Many thanks for your excellent calls and emails! How I love to be with you! Honestly, I think my very favorite quote for Mother's Day, and any day, really, is by Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty, the hero of Hungary who kept the Faith despite imprisonment by the Nazis and then years of torture and imprisonment by the Reds. Cardinal Mindszenty was born in 1892 and died in 1975.

As the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation says, his "respect for mothers was deep and abiding. He wrote one book on a Mother and had planned two more; however, his imprisonment by the Nazis and then the Communists prevented the completion of his work." Here is Cardinal Mindszenty's holy meditation about mothers:

The Most Important Person on earth is a mother. She cannot claim the honor of having built Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral – a dwelling for an immortal soul, the tiny perfection of her baby's body. The angels have not been blessed with

such a grace. They cannot share in God's creative miracle to bring new saints to Heaven. Only a human mother can. Mothers are closer to God the Creator than any other creature; God joins forces with mothers in performing this act of creation. What on God's good earth is more glorious than this: to be a mother?