

Let Mary mother you



It's here. May — the wonderful month when we New Englanders allow ourselves to believe that summer is, indeed, coming.

Vibrant hues of green pop on trees, lilacs blossom in comforting shades of purple and with each passing day, the sun remains in the sky a little longer, filling our days with radiant light.

Surrounded by such brilliant new life, it seems clear why the month of May has been set aside to honor Mary, the mother of God, the cause of our joy, the mother of all life.

It is easy for me to forget that Mary is a saint. I often put her in her own special category. Yet, the fact that she is, undoubtedly, the greatest saint speaks volumes about her humanity, for she is not divine.

Yes, she was born without original sin. Yes, God bestowed immense grace upon her — but she was fully human.

Mother and disciple, Mary offers us profound lessons about what it means to love, be loved and follow God.

Turning to Mary

In the middle of the night, I found myself cradling my precious daughter in her nursery, rocking her and soothing her through the pains of teething. Exhausted and longing for home, I wanted nothing more than to call my mother.

Sometimes, only a mother's voice can provide solace. For a fleeting moment, I longed to be little again and to be free of the responsibilities that come from embracing one's vocation.

As sweet Áine pressed her chubby cheek against mine, I heard the tender voice of Mary whisper to me in the quiet of the nursery, offering reassurance. "You can be little with me, I will hold you, let me be your Mother."

I paused, for I'd never heard Mary so clearly.

As a cradle Catholic, I have always loved Mary. Growing up, the images of Mary in my parents' house, my grandparents' house and my church, the teachings about her role in salvation history, and the stories of her appearances and miracles, all contributed to a deep sense of reverence and love for her. For as long as I can remember, I have known the words to the Hail Mary and rosary beads were not a foreign object in our house.

But devotion to Mary is not about memorization of a prayer or faithfully reciting rosaries, nor is it merely about admiration. It involves seeking her intercession and guidance, knowing her voice and turning to her as you would to your own mother.

While the foundation for my devotion to Mary was laid many years ago, it was not until this moment that my relationship with her deepened. In this new season of motherhood, I have leaned on her more than I ever have before.

The truth is, we all need a mother. No matter how old we are, we long to be nurtured, cared for, seen, known and loved. Whether our mother has died, or she was never able to love us in the way we needed her to, or it's simply 3 a.m. and it's impractical to pick up the phone, there are moments in life when we cannot receive our earthly mother's care and we may feel motherless.

In these moments, Mary longs to wrap her mantle of protection around us. Moreover, Jesus desires us to go to His mother and for us to behold her.

She saw into people's hearts

One of my favorite stories of Mary is the wedding at Cana (*Jn 2:1-12*). While celebrating a young couple's matrimony, Our Lady notices that they have run out of wine. In this moment, Mary's observant, sensitive and compassionate heart shines forth.

Not only does she notice this detail, seemingly before any of the guests do, thus preventing the couple from experiencing embarrassment on their special day, but she humbly and subtly presents the situation to Jesus.

We can learn to live more like Mary, carefully observing the needs of others, alleviating their discomfort through acts of mercy and ultimately praying on their behalf and presenting their heart to Our Lord.

She courageously said yes

Mary's yes, her fiat, forever changed the world. It will impact our children and our children's children for generation after generation.

By obeying God's plan, by desiring His will more than her own, Mary bore the Son of God, who in turn defeated sin and death.

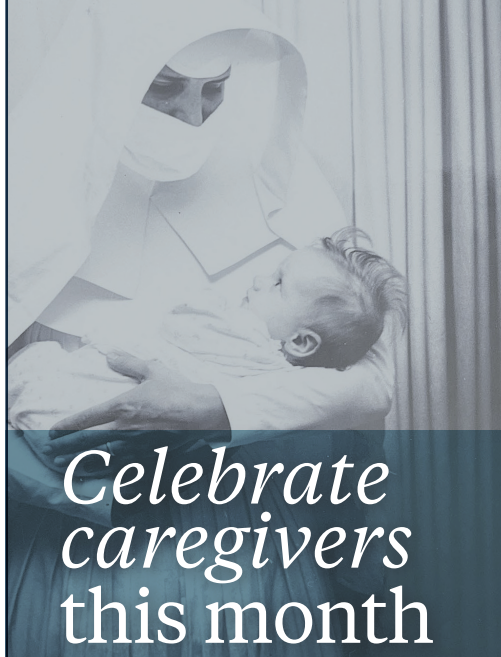
Imagine what the world would look like if we resolved to live grace-filled lives and if we courageously said yes to God's plan, even when we do not understand it, even when it is radical and challenging.

This yes is what will set us apart from being ordinary men and women. This is the story of the saints. Are you willing to be his instrument? Are you willing to surrender to his will? Will you give your fiat? ■

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help,
or sought thy intercession,
was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence
I fly unto thee,
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To thee do I come,
before thee I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer me.
Amen.

Caitlin Bean received her master's degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame and a bachelor's degree in English from Plymouth State University. You can read more of Caitlin's writing at caitlinsica.com.



Celebrate caregivers this month

Spring is always a busy time of year for celebration. From first Communion to graduations, springtime offers plenty of opportunities to celebrate the people and things that are important to us.

Here at Catholic Medical Center (CMC), we celebrate and honor our caring and compassionate healthcare workers during National Nurses Week (May 6–12), National Hospital Week (May 12–18) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week (May 19–25). Additionally, we recognize and honor Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) during National CNA Week (June 13–19).

National Nurses Week concludes each year on Florence Nightingale's birthday. Known as the founder of modern nursing, Nightingale believed nursing was her calling — her divine purpose from God. She was praised for her work during the Crimean War in the mid-1850s, credited with saving thousands of lives through improved sanitation at the hospitals caring for wounded English and Irish troops.

However, Nightingale did not do this work alone. She was helped, in part, by the Sisters of Mercy — the same-named

Sister George Guertin holds a baby in this undated photo. (Courtesy/CMC)

Sisters of Mercy who founded Sacred Heart Hospital here in Manchester in 1892.

During the Crimean War, the sisters aided wounded soldiers, treating their physical wounds while also providing spiritual care to those who requested it. The sisters were known for their kindness and caring, often praying with soldiers at their bedsides.

While times have certainly changed, the compassionate care provided by the Sisters of Mercy is not unlike the care our employees continue to provide today at CMC — high-quality, patient-centered Catholic healthcare based on our mission of providing health, healing and hope for all who seek our care.

CMC continues its long legacy of spiritual care by offering in-room daily Communion, thanks to our volunteer Eucharistic ministers and chaplains — among them Sister Martha Mulligan, a Sister of Mercy.

Daily Mass is held in our chapel and televised in all patient rooms and each room is adorned with a crucifix, serving as a reminder of our commitment to Christ as He provides the talents to our medical staff, guiding their hands in healing the sick.

To this end, during National Nurses Week, we carry out the time-honored tradition of the Blessing of the Hands — hands that are so vital to carrying out Christ's healing ministry with precision and compassion.

Our pastoral care team visits with staff and prays over their hands, thanking God for the gifts He has bestowed, asking Him to continue to bless those who take care of the sick and that the Holy Spirit may guide them. It is a moving display of hope and faith and part of what makes CMC truly different.

As we celebrate Nurses Week, Hospital Week, EMS Week and CNA Week, I am grateful for all our staff and volunteers who make a difference in the lives of our patients. We play many different roles but we are all interconnected, providing the highest-quality care to each patient, guided by the hands of God. ■



Alex Walker is President and CEO of CMC Healthcare System: Catholic Medical Center, New England Heart & Vascular Institute and several subsidiaries. He and his wife, Lisa, live in Manchester.

