Opinion
NCR Voices



Shannon Evans with her own mother and daughter Thea (Courtesy of Shannon Evans)

by Shannon Evans O'Brien

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Editor's note: *Shannon Evans, NCR spirituality and culture editor, shared the following reflection in the May 10 edition of the Inside NCR weekly newsletter. Inside NCR is typically an exclusive part of NCR Forward membership. But, Shannon's words resonated with many members and NCR staff, so we decided to share it with our readers.*

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Dear Friends,

I'm a mom of five, and here's the cold, hard truth: I don't want flowers for Mother's Day. (Unless they're the yellow dandelions my children pluck from the weeds in our yard.) I don't want to wait an hour at a fancy restaurant — I don't even like brunch. I have no interest in seeing the pain on the faces of my infertile friends when I and all the other women with compliant reproductive systems are invited to stand and be blessed at the end of Mass.

It's all well-intentioned, I know that, but at the end of the day the usual Mother's Day traditions fall flat and lifeless at the feet of the reality that is motherhood in the United States today. Idealizing and romanticizing mothers is the social agreement we as a culture have made to avoid listening to them.

What do moms actually want for Mother's Day? We want to know our children will not be murdered when we drop them off at school or when we take them out for weekend shopping. We want a robust and fair paid parental leave when we give birth or adopt. We want free access to lactation consultants and postpartum counseling. We want the gaps on our resumes due to childrearing to be an asset, not a liability. We want just wages for our work. We want to know we will pass on a liveable planet to our kids. We want the dignity of making choices about our own medical care. We want our Black boys to not be racially profiled. We want our Indigenous girls to not disappear.



Shannon with her children and a friend's child at an immigration action in 2018. (Courtesy of Shannon Evans)

But these things are a lot to ask in this country, apparently. So instead we will get flowers and brunch and a quick blessing at Mass so that everyone can go back to their busy lives without actually listening to the people on whom the species depends for continuation. They will call us saints as a consolation prize instead of repenting for forcing us to endure trauma.

I know well that famous quote from Pope John Paul II, "Do not give way to despair. We are an Easter people and Hallelujah is our song!" But I'll be honest: giving way to despair is looking like an awfully reasonable response to the state of the country in which I am raising my precious children. And so I fight despair by looking into their eyes and determining for the hundredth time to do everything I can to leave them

with a better future. I fight despair by writing prayer books for other moms. I fight despair by working at NCR, where my passion for change is matched (or exceeded!) by the passion of my colleagues and you, our readers.



Proof that moms today are tired (Courtesy of Shannon Evans)

The best way to thank the mother figures in our lives this Sunday is not with flowers and breakfast – although those can be sweet gestures – but rather by taking one actionable step for a more just world in their honor.

For rejecting complacency and fighting the good fight,

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A version of this story appeared in the **May 26-June 8, 2023** print issue under the headline: Moms want justice, not brunch, for Mother's Day.