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For those who had a hard Mother's Day

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NCR Today

Yesterday was Mother's Day, and for the first time since I became a mother I wasn't at graduation at the university where I work. I was lucky to spend the day with my mother, my sister, my children and other family. But I remember the Mother's Days that were really hard for me, during those long years when my husband and I were waiting to become parents.

So I was happy to see so many people this year remembering that, while it's definitely worthwhile to set aside a day to honor those who mother through giving birth or through adoption, there are lots of people -- female and even male -- who "mother" by being life-giving and nurturing in other ways. That made Sunday a difficult day for some. As one friend on Facebook posted early in the day: "To all the women out there who are not mothers- by choice or by chance- know that you are loved [too] today no less than anyone else."

In a column for *U.S Catholic*, Vinita Hampton Wright has many words of wisdom on this topic, including these:

For anyone ? pastors, friends, fellow parishioners ? who wants to handle Mother?s Day in a way that is generous to all, please try a larger view. Motherhood in God?s kingdom goes far beyond physical childbirth or parenting through adoption. Motherhood is about nurturing, and many women who have never been mothers physically nevertheless brim with the ability and passion to nurture others.

It's interesting that most men who are not biological or adoptive fathers do not have a similar feeling of feeling left out on Father's Day. I can only guess that it's because our culture still defines women

primarily as mothers, while men have many identities.

I have very mixed feelings about the typical church rituals around Mother's Day. Singling out moms by having them stand, or receive flowers, or come to the front to be blessed is nice, but it does leave the women left sitting in their pews feeling branded as "non-Moms." Again, this might not be so painful if we didn't still believe that motherhood is somehow the peak of female experience.

Our pastor did something new yesterday: After the homily, he invited children to come forward and say something about their moms. Guess whose son was the first to run up and grab the microphone? I thought it was sweet, but of course, I am biased!

Blogger Ginny Kubitz Moyer created a list of "People to pray for on Mother's Day," including those who have lost a child, who have lost their mothers, or who have unsuccessfully tried to become mothers. I'm sure there are many more we could add to that list, such as those estranged from their mothers and biological mothers who have placed their children for adoption.

Prayers, yes. But also other acts of compassion. It helps, I think, that some are at least acknowledging the feelings of those who are hurting on this day.

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