



Message for Mother's Day

10 May 2026

**His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May Jesus and Mary be in your souls.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, we welcome this opportunity to pause and give thanks for the women who gave us life, nurtured us, and helped us become who we are. Mothers play a crucial role in our society and our Church. Religiously and spiritually, they contribute so very much to shape our Christian identity (cf. 2 Tim 1:5). We live in a pluralistic, multicultural and complex society where the Christian faith can no longer be assumed or simply inherited from the surrounding culture, where Christian ideals and truths are presented as one among many. In this setting the formation of Christian identity is of paramount importance (Rom. 12:2; *Familiaris Consortio*, 17).

The reality of who we are in Christ is multi-faceted, and at face value many mothers may feel helpless when faced with the onslaught of never-ending influences upon their children. To those mothers I want you to know and remember that long before your child encounters secular social media, harmful trends or ideologies, your child experiences your love, trust, forgiveness, and belonging within your family (*Amoris Laetitia*, 174). These early experiences shape the heart and imagination in ways that make faith intelligible later in life. When a child learns what love is through the patience of a mother, the words of the Scripture about God's love begin to make sense (1 Jn 4:7-11). When a child experiences mercy and reconciliation at home, the message of Christ's forgiveness is no longer abstract (Is 66:13).

While the concept of the *domestic church* expresses a profound truth – it is the place where the faith is first shaped, practiced, and transmitted – many forget that these experiences are formative of identity (LG, 11; CCC 1655-1658). Christian identity is the framework through which a young person begins to interpret the world in the light of faith (*Christifideles Laici*, 8,28). In a secular culture where identity is frequently presented as something fluid or self-created, children are encouraged to define themselves according to personal preference, achievement, or social recognition. Yet the Christian vision of identity is very different, it is far more profound and holistic (*Amoris Laetitia*, 56). At the heart of the Gospel lies the conviction that each person is first and foremost a beloved child of God (Augustine, *Confessions* I,1). Our identity is not invented; it is received as a gift (CCC 1700).

Mothers often become the first witnesses to this truth. When a child is loved not for what he or she accomplishes but simply for who they are, a profound lesson is learned (*Redemptor Hominis*, 10). The child begins to understand that dignity does not depend on success, popularity, or performance. This experience of love prepares the heart to receive the Christian proclamation that



every human person is created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ (Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 54).

Our Christian identity helps to navigate the tensions between faith and culture, where Christian values are sometimes misunderstood or dismissed (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 17). The formation of Christian identity often happens through example and experience rather than argument and persuasion (Matt 5:16). Children may forget many words, but the memory of a mother who trusted God in difficult moments can remain for a lifetime.

For Christians, the ultimate model of motherhood is found in Mary, Mother of Jesus. Her *Magnificat* recalled her “soul” (*nephesh*), her very being, her very identity. It was her “spirit” (*ruach*), the very core of her being that gave us her *fiat* (Lk 1:38; 46-47). Mary provides a powerful example of how our truest self, indeed our very identity, is found in God’s will, truth and provident plan for us.

On this Mother’s Day, and each day of the year, our gratitude goes far beyond appreciation for the many sacrifices mothers make. We recognize their essential role in helping us discover who we truly are. In a world where identity is very often presented as uncertain or fragmented, mothers provide the first and most enduring witness to the truth that every human life is a gift and that every person is called into a relationship with God. I give thanks to all the mothers in the Archdiocese of Toronto; I pray for you and your families and ask that you continue to pray for me.

Happy and Blessed Mother’s Day to all our mothers.