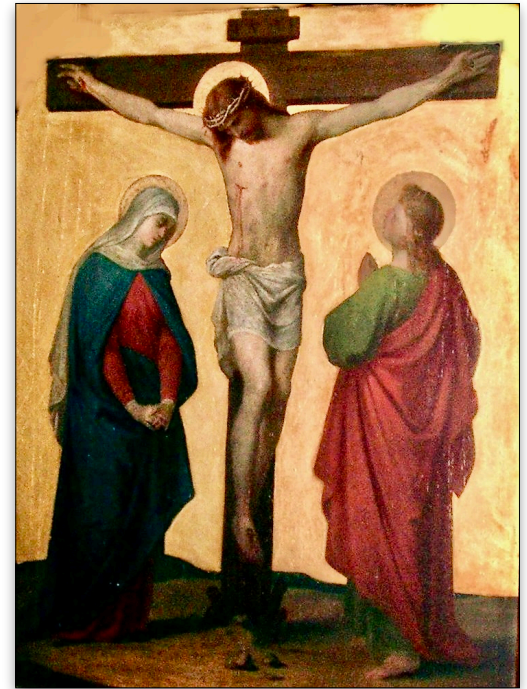


## RESPECT LIFE HOLY HOUR REFLECTION FOR MAY, 2025 - A MOTHER'S DAY REFLECTION

Imagine sitting in your doctor's office being told that the headaches and nausea from which you were suffering were due to a cancerous brain tumor, and that your only chance of survival was to have multiple surgeries followed by toxic chemo and radiation therapy. Imagine going through sixteen months of testing... waiting... decision-making... fights with insurance companies... surgeries... and terrible treatment-related side-effects... Imagine the range of emotions you might experience. Would they include fear... anger... despair?

Now imagine that it is not you sitting in the doctor's office receiving such a diagnosis about yourself, but sitting in a pediatrician's office receiving such a diagnosis about your one year old daughter sitting on your lap! For close to a year, several of us have been praying for such a child and her parents. Their story has been powerfully documented by the mother. She has exquisitely captured the range of emotions a parent experiences watching his or her young child (an only child) suffer from a cruel and relentless disease and its consequences. We were privy not only to the suffering of the sick child, but also to a very different kind of suffering experienced by the parents.

What struck me about the mother's updates was, that, no matter what it was about... a pending surgery... a pending test result... the terrible side-effects of toxic therapies... a brief reprieve... attempts by healthcare workers to turn medical milestones into a game a young child might understand, invariably, the update ended with a request for prayer. It was obvious in every update that hope and trust in the Lord factored heavily in helping the parents get through their trials. This past Friday the mom reported, "Scan is clear...no evidence of disease..... PRAYERS ANSWERED." She followed her joyful declaration with expressions of deep appreciation and gratitude for the many prayers and acts of charity they had received. As Mother's Day approaches, I can't help but think, "What a window into the heart and mind of a mother the updates have been." The image of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, standing at the foot of her dying Son's cross comes to mind. Both mother and Son were very intimately acquainted with suffering, weren't they?



MARY AT THE FOOT OF HER SON'S CROSS

After reading the mother's update on Friday, I "happened" upon an interview with a mother of a Down Syndrome child. She articulated tearfully the challenges, doubts and questions with which she had struggled. She said what turned things around for her was the realization that only Christianity found meaning in suffering. For wasn't it a mother's yes and union with her Son's suffering which led to the greatest act of love that ever was and ever will be... that of God taking on human flesh so that through His suffering, death and resurrection, He could restore humanity to new life?

Thank you, mothers, for your many sacrificial acts of love!

St. John Paul II, pray for us...

May 8, 2025