I. Introduction

One Mother’s Day a woman was preparing to do the dishes after dinner when her teenage daughter walked into the kitchen. The girl was appalled to see her mother at the sink, and said, “Oh, Mom, you shouldn’t have to do the dishes on Mother’s Day!” The mother was touched by her thoughtfulness and was about to give her the apron and the scrub brush, until the daughter added, “You can let them go for now, and do them tomorrow” (James Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited, p. 383).

The daughter’s attitude illustrates the feelings we so often have toward mothers: we assume they’ll do whatever has to be done, we take it for granted they enjoy—or at least don’t mind—taking care of us, and we so often identify them in terms of the service they give. This isn’t entirely fair, of course, but there is a noble aspect to it: from a Christian perspective, to see someone as a servant can actually be a way of paying compliment. Jesus came to serve, and we grow in His grace by imitating His example. Truly following Jesus means serving Him in one another.

II. Development

As today’s readings show, the more we love God, the more we’ll be willing to serve others in His Name. The 1st Reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes how the early Church quickly recognized the need for persons who would devote themselves to caring for the poor. The importance of this ministry is shown by the fact that the apostles didn’t simply treat it as an unimportant detail to be handled as quickly as possible; instead, they first addressed the whole community, and then prayed over the men who were chosen and ritually imposed hands on them. Service is a central part of the Christian message, and it has great spiritual value, as St. Peter teaches in the 2nd Reading. He states that we’re part of “a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. . . .” These sacrifices are not only the prayers we say, but also the good deeds we perform in a loving spirit. When we work together for God’s glory and the well-being of His people, we are indeed “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people He claims for His own. . . .”

Jesus Himself illustrates this commitment to service, for in the Gospel He assures the apostles that when He ascends from their presence, it will not only be to rest from His labors on earth and to be glorified in Heaven, but also to prepare a true home for them, a dwelling place of eternal glory. Even after humbling Himself by becoming a human being, even after three years of total self-giving on earth, and even after offering His very life for us in the greatest sacrifice ever made, Jesus continues to help us and protect us and serve us. We in turn must serve others in His Name—and Our Lord promises that we will be able to do this if we have faith in Him.
III. Conclusion

Two women—we’ll call them Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones—became friends. Mrs. Smith was a stay-at-home mom, but Mrs. Jones never got around to having children; she and her husband were always too busy and, frankly, a little afraid of raising children in today’s world. One day Mrs. Jones visited her friend’s home for the first time, and Mrs. Smith called in her two young children—who happened to be extremely well-behaved and polite. When their mother sent them outside to play a few minutes later, the visitor exclaimed in envy and wonder, “Oh, I’d give my life to have two such wonderful children!” Mrs. Smith looked at her in all seriousness and said, “That’s exactly what it costs” (Walter B. Knight, *Knight’s Master Book of 4000 Illustrations*, p. 418).

Truly dedicated mothers are wholehearted in their efforts to be there for and be of service to their families—and in this, they often illustrate the way of Christ, which all of us, as His disciples, are called to follow. This is true in a number of ways. First of all, mothers are always making sacrifices for their husbands and children. They’ll go without a new dress if someone in the family needs clothes for work or school; they’ll pass on dessert if there isn’t enough for everyone; they’ll take care of everyone else’s needs before addressing their own. As Christians, we too should think of others, and not only of ourselves; we should be willing to consider the needs and feelings of those around us, and assist and do favors for them, even if it’s not always enjoyable or convenient.

Secondly, mothers can be very proud of their families, and they desire to protect them and defend them from criticism; mothers love their families no matter what they do. We should be proud of Christ and His Church; we should defend our faith and stand up for what we believe. It’s all right to be ashamed of certain Church leaders and members, but never of the Catholic Faith or the Church itself. Thirdly, mothers are the people children turn to when they’re hurt or lonely or frightened; a mother’s kiss can make a scratch feel better, her loving words can strengthen a child’s fragile self-esteem, and her gentle touch can reassure a little one that everything will be all-right. In the same way, we should be available and understanding if others turn to us for sympathy and friendship and support.

Fourthly, mothers are the ones who “hold the family together” by their love and patience and presence; family life revolves around them. Jesus calls His followers to play this same role in the world. Society needs us to put our faith into practice, for without the influence and moral values of millions of Christians, it would certainly go farther astray than it already has and perhaps even self-destruct. Lastly, mothers—and fathers—are ideally the ones who teach their children about religion: not just by talking about it, but by living it out. We as Christians must make faith real in and for the world by putting it into practice ourselves; attracting others to Jesus through our good example is one of the greatest acts of service we can give.

Mothers are too often taken for granted, but when we stop to think about them, we can very readily appreciate the many simple but life-changing ways they serve us. Jesus calls
us to measure ourselves by this same standard. If we truly love Him, we’ll show it by our good deeds and by the things we do for others in His Name.