

Mother's Day and the Unique Sacrifice of the Female

By Denise Noe



As we celebrate Mother's Day, it is worthwhile to consider the extraordinary debt that all human beings of both genders owe to the human female.

Reproduction is one of the few areas in which differences between male and female are incontrovertible, rather than a matter of degree as in, for example, physical strength. It has rightly been said, "Any male can be a father. It takes a real man to be a Dad." Men accept major challenges when they are actively involved in raising children.

However, for a human being to come into the world, a female must make an enormous sacrifice. Morning sickness, fatigue, changed appetites or "craves," dizziness, heartburn, indigestion, light-headedness and even fainting, bloating, acne, backaches, headaches, insomnia, increased urination (sometimes including incontinence), joint swelling, hair loss, shortness of breath, and many other painful conditions can afflict a pregnant lady. To bring a new human into the world, a girl or woman must live for months with daily discomfort and awkwardness as her belly expands.

Childbirth is inevitably painful and dangerous for the woman giving birth. Labor can involve hours, and often days, of agonizing pain in which the female body is stretched and torn.

For much of human existence, mothers routinely died giving birth. Modern medical advances have made such deaths rare but they still occur and probably always will.

A pregnancy carried to term usually leaves the female scarred by stretch marks and may even result in a belly that is permanently puffed.

Courage is often thought of as a masculine virtue but the human species would not have survived more than one generation were it not for female courage. With a handful of rare exceptions – people like Gianna Jessen who survived abortions – every human being owes his or her existence to the sacrifice of childbirth.

This writer does not want to contribute to a “battle of the sexes” mentality. The medical advances helping women survive pregnancy were made primarily by men. Male doctors and scientists have done much to ease the difficulties pregnancy poses for women – although those difficulties obviously cannot be eliminated.

It is important to note that women become mothers without being pregnant: adoptive mothers and stepmothers are certainly mothers. Mother’s Day honors them along with biological mothers. However, it remains true that the children adoptive moms and step-moms raise have life because of the courage and sacrifice of the mother who gave birth.

Motherhood is an everyday miracle of specifically female bravery and self-sacrifice.