

Hi, my name is Donna Lesch and I speak to you as a mother of two children, Dylan who is 9 and Kayla who is almost 11. But it doesn't seem long ago when I was just dreaming of starting my own family, and when I was carrying our first child. The excitement of a new, little person to love and care for consumed many days, as the preparations were extensive – everything from birthing classes, to baby showers, to preparing the household for the arrival of the baby. That nesting period before the birth of our first child was such a beautiful time, the anticipation was joy itself!

I imagine, Mary, that you felt the joy of anticipation, too, though the circumstances leading up to the birth of your baby were quite different, weren't they? At the time, you were only betrothed to Joseph, but with trusting faith you accepted God's plans for you to give birth to the Son of God. I wonder if you were worried about Joseph's reaction to the situation, or anxious about your own fate. I so admire your courage!

Once our baby was born, anticipation became exhaustion, as the feedings and diaper changes occurred without regard for time of day. The constant care was a reality, as was the constant concern ... the concern that all her needs were being met, that she was growing at the right rate, and developing in all the right the ways - rolling over, sitting, crawling, standing, talking. Her safety was always a concern, too – I remember driving the first few times with the baby on board – the term 'precious cargo' was never more taken more to heart. While the first few years were intense, they were also deeply satisfying because we knew our baby intimately – her tiny hands, her tiny toes, her different cries - and she completely depended on us.

Mary, how lucky you were to know Jesus so intimately, to care for him, to cradle him in your arms, and to see him grow. Did you ever feel the weight of the world as you were raising Jesus? Did the responsibility ever overwhelm you knowing that Jesus was our salvation?

My children have made it through the infant and toddler years – they are now in the “Youth” stage – but there are still challenges, sometimes the biggest is just trying to balance the busy-ness of life with what really matters most to us. And sometimes our own humanity gets the best of us, and someone gets upset or someone's feelings get hurt – and things need to be smoothed over, and a lesson likely to be learned by someone...that someone being me on occasion! It's not always easy, there are times where I really have to say, God, help me here. So there *are* challenges, but the rewards are great – a kiss on the cheek and a sincere hug; a little hand, or not so little any more, patting me on the back as a sign of understanding or encouragement; an excited “Thanks Mom” when I make their favorite meal. The love that is packed into each of those gestures makes parenting the best journey ever.

As I look ahead to future milestones, I know there will be many more challenges along the way, which will bring more concerns...but there will be lots of love, too.

Mary, please help us to have the trusting faith that you had, and to rest in God's plans for our family. Thank you for showing us how to joyfully accept God's will, for giving birth to Jesus, and for raising him to be our Savior. I pray that our hearts will always be open to the Word of God, as was yours.