

These Moms Share Special Gifts
By Erma Bombeck

Most women become mothers by accident, some by choice, a few by social pressures, and a couple by habit. This year, nearly 100,000 women will become mothers of handicapped children. Did you ever wonder how mothers of handicapped children are chosen?

Somehow I visualize God hovering over Earth selecting his instruments for propagation with great care and deliberation. As he observes, he instructs his angels to make notes in a giant ledger. 'Armstrong, Beth, son, patron saint Matthew. Forrest, Marjorie, daughter, patron saint Cecelia. Rudledge, Carrie, twins, patron saint...give her Gerard. He's used to profanity.' Finally he passes a name to an angel and smiles, 'Give her a handicapped child.'

The angel is curious, 'Why this one, God? She's so happy.'

'Exactly,' says God. 'Could I give a handicapped child a mother who does not know laughter? That would be cruel.'

'But has she patience?' asks the angel.

'I don't want her to have too much patience, or she will drown in a sea of self pity and despair. Once the shock and resentment wear off, she'll handle it. She has that feeling of self and independence that is so rare and so necessary in a mother. You see, the child I'm going to give her has his own world. She has to make him live in her world, and that's not going to be easy.'

'But, Lord, I don't think that she even believes in you.'

God smiles, 'No matter. I can fix that. This one is perfect. She has just enough selfishness.'

The angel gasps, 'Selfishness? Is that a virtue?'

God nods, 'If she can't separate herself from the child occasionally, she'll never survive. Yes, here is a woman whom I will bless with a child less than perfect. She doesn't realize it yet, but she is to be envied. She will never take for granted a spoken word. She will never consider a step ordinary. When her child says Momma for the first time, she will be present at a miracle and know it! When she describes a tree or a sunset to her blind child, she will see it as few people ever see my creations.'

'I will permit her to see clearly the things I see...ignorance, cruelty, prejudice...and allow her to rise above them. She will never be alone. I will be at her side every minute of every day of her life, because she is doing my work as surely as she is here by my side.'

'And what about her patron saint?' asks the angel, pen poised in midair.

God smiles, 'A mirror will suffice.'