

Love to Last a Lifetime

On the evening of Aug. 16, 1987, a Northwest Airlines Flight 255 crashed just after takeoff from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people.

The lone survivor was a small, 4-year-old girl by the name of Cecilia Cichan.

The immediate question was: How could she survive when everyone else had died? Was she sitting in just the right seat? Was it her size that helped her avoid the fate of the other passengers?



It was later learned that the first responders to the accident were so surprised to find her alive that they concluded that she must have been a passenger in one of the vehicles on the highway where the plane had crashed. Although very young, Cecilia was old enough to tell the amazing story behind her miraculous survival.

According to the little girl's testimony, as the plane was falling from the sky, her mother unbuckled her own seat belt, knelt down in front of her, wrapped her arms and body around her, and refused to let go. Cecilia's mother, Paula Cichan, had used her own body to shield her from death.

Cecilia suffered severe burns, as well as sustaining fractures to her skull, collarbone and left leg. She arrived at the hospital in critical condition, but later managed to make a full recovery.

What an unimaginable act of selfless love of the mother. Cecilia is now a grown woman. As such, she grew up without the tangible love of her mother. Her mother wasn't there to send her off on that first day of school, or available to counsel her during those difficult teen years, present to cheer for her on graduation day, or be there to cry for joy on her wedding day.

Nevertheless, we can be certain of one thing. There has never been a day – no, not one moment – when Cecilia has ever questioned her mother's love. By one pure, bold and courageous act, this mother sent her daughter a message of love sufficient to last her daughter a lifetime. Such an unequivocal and selfless act stands firm like a rock, immovable and unchallengeable.

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Mother's Day is coming up Sunday. This story is a powerful reminder of the amazing love mothers have for their children. Be certain to honor your mother – still living or passed on – in some appropriate way this weekend.

This story also provides a spiritual lesson. Did you know that Jesus was moved by just such a selfless love when He put Himself in harm's way to secure your salvation? By setting aside the exercise of His deity and taking on the humble form of humanity, Jesus entered Jerusalem to meet His prophesied end. By dying on the cross, Jesus offered Himself, His own body, to shield you from eternal death.



When God seems distant, you must remember the message of the cross. Such an unequivocal act of love stands firm like a rock, immovable and unchallengeable. So believe and know that you are truly loved.

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you (John 15:13-14 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter