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When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "WOMAN, HERE IS YOUR SON!" Then he said to the disciple, "HERE IS YOUR MOTHER!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

The eighteen-year-old young man already had attempted suicide twice. The torment and isolation were simply too great. Now, away from home for the first time, he wrote the careful letter to his parents. "Dear Mom and Dad. There is no easy way to say this. I am gay – what you call "homosexual". I need your help and love. Who else could understand me?"

He waited. Five days later the envelope came. With fear on the edge of terror, and hope that he dared not admit, he opened the paper and found its only contents: his birth certificate torn in pieces.

The word of Christ at the moment of his greatest agony was a radical word of love and grace. His message: *You belong to a family which not even death can destroy. Earthly fear or ignorance, weakness or bigotry or even violence may tear into pieces the world's affirmation of your value and goodness. But I say to you, there is a God who surrounds you with the true love of a mother and the faithfulness of a true child. That love and faithfulness may not be where you had hoped or yearned. But it is there. I give it to you – without conditions. "Woman behold your son. Son or daughter, behold your mother."*