

## Chapter 11

### **The Mother I Became After Loss**

Before Anthony died, I was a mother who loved deeply.

After Anthony died, I became a mother who understood love in a way I never knew was possible.

Losing a child changes the way you see everything.

The things that once seemed important become smaller. The moments you once rushed through become the moments you wish you could hold onto forever.

A simple phone call.

A family gathering.

A hug at the end of a visit.

An ordinary day together.

You begin to understand that ordinary moments are not ordinary at all. They are gifts.

Anthony's life changed me.

His death broke my heart, but it also opened my eyes to the preciousness of the people still beside me.

I became more aware of the words I say.

The love I give.

The time I spend.

I don't want to leave important things unsaid. I don't want the people I love to ever wonder if they mattered.

I want my children to know.

I want my family to know.

I want the people God places in my path to know.

You are loved.

After Anthony, I became more compassionate toward the pain of others. I became slower to judge and quicker to understand. I learned that everyone is carrying something — even the people who look like they have it all together.

Sometimes the strongest person in the room is the one silently carrying a heartbreak no one else can see.

My faith changed too.

I had questions. I had moments of deep sadness. I had moments when I didn't understand why something so painful was allowed to happen.

But through those questions, I learned that faith is not about never hurting.  
Faith is holding on even while you hurt.  
It is trusting God when you do not have all the answers.  
It is believing that love is still present, even in the darkest moments.  
Anthony also changed the way I love my children who are still here.  
I learned not to let fear steal the gift of today.  
I learned to celebrate them.  
To listen. To hug longer.  
To be present.  
Because I know now how precious presence truly is.  
The mother I was before Anthony's death loved her children with all her heart.  
The mother I became after his death loves with a deeper understanding of how fragile and beautiful life can be.  
I would give anything to have Anthony back.  
That will always be true.  
But I also know this:  
The love I have for Anthony did not end when his life ended.  
It transformed me.  
It made me more compassionate.  
It made me more intentional.  
It made me more aware of the sacred gift of simply being together.  
Anthony will always be part of who I am.  
He is part of my story.  
He is part of my heart.  
And because I was his mother, I will carry that love for the rest of my life.  
It is in every person whose life was touched by Anthony.  
The anniversary of the day I lost him will always be painful.  
But it is also a reminder of something beautiful:  
I was blessed to be his mother.  
And no day on a calendar can ever take that away.