

### **MOTHER EAGLE**

**Question:** What challenges are uniquely faced by single-parent families? A simple children's fable by Leo Tolstoy may bring out some of those challenges.

An eagle built a nest in a tree beside a busy road, far from the sea, and hatched several baby eagles. One day, when the eagle returned to the nest with a large fish in her claws, there were some men working nearby. Seeing the fish, they surrounded the tree, shouting and throwing stones at the eagle. When the eagle dropped her fish, they picked it up and went away.

The eagle perched on the edge of the nest, and the eaglets raised their little heads and cheeped and shrilled. They were hungry. But their mother was too tired to fly back to the sea. She lowered herself into the nest, covered her babies with her wings, petted them and smoothed their feathers, as though begging them to be patient. But the more she petted them, the louder they squawked and shrilled. The eaglets kept shrilling even more pitifully. Suddenly the mother eagle gave a desperate cry, spread her wings, and flew wearily toward the sea.

She returned late in the evening, flying slowly and low, again bringing in her claws a large fish. As she swooped toward the nest she looked down to see if there were any people near the tree. Seeing none, she folded her wings and perched on the edge of the nest. The eaglets raised their little heads and opened their little beaks. The mother eagle tore off pieces of the fish and fed her hungry babies.

**Possible answers:**

- Perhaps the concern most deeply felt by single parents is the reality that the full weight of being the only parent is theirs.
- There is no mate to spell them when they are exhausted, ill, or angry during the long hours of parenting.
- It is all up to them.

**Question:** What resources are available to the single parent to help compensate for the absence of a spouse in the following areas?

- financial
- emotional or psychological
- career opportunities
- help with the child(ren)
- education

Discuss the fact that whether the single parent is male or female, he/she encounters the same problems.