

The Mother We Almost Forgot

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Mother Goose, Mother Hen, Mother Hubbard, Mother Nature, Mother Church, Mother Love powerful, sensitive, nurturing, insightful, a parent, grandparent, aunt a friend, a teacher: a loved one who guides and cares for and leads us .. the source of our very first human relationship... a word of many meanings, as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary:

Mother: A noun ... A mucilaginous substance produced in vinegar during fermentation by mold fungus!

Mother is an emotional, factual, moving, episodic, fluxuating word, engendering as many responses as there are people, harboring many names, variations and relationships. Some of us have been lucky and experienced the kind of relationship with our mothers that the Hallmark greeting card industry has tried to capture, the Leave it Beaver Mom, the humorous and serious mom, the silly profound and even absurd mom, but still a loving image of who our mothers are supposed to represent. Some are not so lucky, as there are those who never felt such love from their biological mothers, or who were never mothered in the image that society celebrates. There are some who grieve today, who have lost their mothers through death or the cruelty of premature illness, or from the ravages of age where their mother's memory of loved ones, no longer exists.

For them this day is very hard. Still, we all find at each stage of our living from childhood through adulthood those whom we remember with great affection, who mothered us and cared for us unconditionally, even when and if our own mothers could not.

We celebrate our Mothers who evolved over the years who in our lifetimes have graduated from whalebone corsets to Levi's, from a Brady bunch household to same sex families. Mothers who rose up from verbal oppression and physical compression to enter the halls of justice and government; from the dishpan to CEO ... and today we take time to ponder her successes and failures, her role in the family in the work force, in the community and in religion.

Over the years I've spoken of all of these Moms, but there are a few qualities of motherhood that I've left out. Of course I am the perfect person to do this, as not having ever been a mother, that fact gives me a distinct, observational and objective advantage! As we all know those who have not walked that path, are often the most vocal and authoritative on subjects they know little or nothing about. So as I find myself in that situation once again I would like to share with you a few of those unauthorized observations that have stayed with me and served me well over the years.

First of all, incase no one has ever noticed, those who mother us are the emergency fix-it queens of the universe. They are the 3 prong adaptors in a world of 2 prong outlets! Along with functioning in the land of skinned knees, runny noses and sibling rivalry they have some remarkable ways of coping with life's unwelcome surprises. For example, when a friend of mine's daughter was lining up in the foyer of her church on her wedding day, a bridesmaid accidentally stepped on the massive flowing train of the bride's wedding gown, which left a nasty tear at the waist just as the wedding prelude began. Good ole mom, jumped to the rescue. In one lightening fast motion she stuffed a kleenex in the brides hand, who was about to burst into a flood of tears, extracted a small staple gun and a roll of white electrical tape from her purse and expertly and invisibly reattached the seam before the wedding party reached the first pew! Now that should go on her resume!

That example alone should answer the question that all Dad's and partners out there have always asked, "why do you have to lug around such a huge suitcase of a purse? What is so important that you have to take it everywhere?"

Moms have an amazing foresight at times such as these, and they know what can happen and what might be needed to repair the damage. How can one carry the tools of the motherhood trade in anything smaller?

Secondly, Mom's are natural diplomats, have an unusual way of making light of the unintentional mistakes their kids and partners make. A minister friend of mine had a young child who wanted to surprise her on Mothers Day by making her a strawberry shortcake with whipped cream. With dad's help he cut the sponge cake, dished out the fresh strawberries and all by himself took the can of whipped cream and with all his might pressed the spout which angled in the wrong direction and completely missed the shortcake adorning the kitchen wall with a long strip of whipped cream.

Dad panicked "and hearing the commotion Mom arrived in the kitchen in time to hear the beginnings of an angry reprimand, " I showed you how to do it ... Dad's tantrum was cut short by Mom's response, "well you didn't show me" and she grabbed the can off the counter and emptied it all over both of them from head to toe. Their laughter could be heard throughout the neighborhood as she dragged them out to the back yard to hose them down. It was a Mothers Day they still laugh about as one of the best ever. Encountering a potentially bad situation and turning it around is what those who mother, do everyday so often without realizing how much difference it can make in how families relate to one another.

Thirdly, those who mother are the Avalokiteshvaras of the western world.

Personified by the Buddhist female called a Kwan-Yin, a childless compassionate being with a thousand arms outstretched and ready to embrace the ills and heal all wounds.

Today the Kwan- Yins are the nurturers and caregivers, the jugglers who volunteer, manage homes, raise children and also work. Who can handle 10 tasks at once simply because they are used to doing that.

To prove my point, There is not a company or corporation in the world that could survive for long without their share of Avalokiteshvaras.

Just simply remove every female administrative assistant, receptionist and secretary from the corporate world for one day and see how quickly the entire business community comes to a screeching halt.

There are so many more qualities of mothering that affect us all our lives, that influence how we learn, how we cope and persevere, form our prejudices and biases, and even determine the course of our spirituality. Some of us receive much more mothering than others but the requirements for mothering do not begin and end with women. What we have experienced in our upbringing and all through our living rubs off on us and as adults as we learn to give and to receive what we have been given. There is one more quality of motherhood that is so obvious and in our faces, that I overlooked her. An extraordinary Mom, looming over us, now a bit shabby and worn with age, once fresh polished and gleaming, a beacon in the community, whose universal light is steady and unrelenting. I was raised by her, as were so many of you. I learned from him, shaped my values and life course because of her teaching and guidance, their patience and wisdom.

Growing up I seldom thought of the men and women in my church as a Mothering image, but as I think back to all the people, especially those who spiritually cared for me and shared their talents and caring, their knowledge, their love and joy with me over the years, I could not ignore their presence in my life.

As spiritual children, we~ come to church, as the one place in our lives where we never ever stop seeking a means for growing and learning.

In the past year as your minister, I have felt very cared for and mothered by all of you, who have in so many ways deeply influenced my commitment to ministry. I have found much to my delight a church family who could reach into that proverbial handbag and pull out the small miracles that make it work. I watched you take difficult situations and soothe them over with humor and respect. You coped with doing a great deal with even less time to spare and juggled so much with so little., I have gained so much more from you than I could possibly have given back, as you pumped new life and a new hope back into my soul.

Now I ask you as members and friends of this congregation to turn your thoughts and energies to all the creative and practical aspects of mothering that this church is going to need both physically and financially to sustain itself, to grow stronger and to continue doing its remarkable work, keeping in mind all who have come through these doors and found acceptance, love and most of all a very real and loving spiritual home. Like any good mother the depth of our love is unconditional. You do not have to perform or recite or believe a certain way to be respected and loved. You may follow your own path, take up the spiritual tools of your choice and explore the boundaries of your uniqueness. We only ask that you see in the world around you for the remarkable miracle that it is, that you seek out within the wide parameters of this faith, a thread of the extraordinary that links us all to the divine within. What greater gift can a mother give than a united sense of self with the miracle of all creation.

In conclusion, on this Mothers Day, we have great cause to celebrate not only the mothers in our lives, the lessons they have taught us, the curious, unique and heartfelt ways that they have guided us through this maze of life; but also the ways that we have mothered each other, our children our friends, perfect strangers and those who have been fortunate enough to have found how much good mothering does matter to the life of this church, to its minister, to this community and its people. Happy Mothers Day everyone ...

So be it. Amen.

Rev Helen C. (Holly) Baylies © 2009