

Mothers Day.

Today is supposed to be a day of joy, thanksgiving and celebration. I hope for many of you that this is true. But this year for many other people it will be a different emotional day. I don't know how many of the thousands of deaths due to Covid have involved Mothers, but I suspect their numbers are high. Maybe this is the first Mother's Day without your beloved Mother, and probably more poignant because you were not allowed to say your goodbyes. For others like me a long time has passed since our mother's death, 39 years this year in my case but this day is poignant too as my Mom died on the eve of Mother's Day. It was unexpected and we too did not say our final goodbyes. However I do like to remember the good times, reminisce about the time we spent together and try to make it a joyful occasion.

I like to think back to the nature of my mother, and yes I had a good relationship and a happy childhood. She was a woman of spirit and as I remember I'll try to describe what that spirit was.

I hope that perhaps you can relate to some of these things.

There was always a spirit of love even if she was cross with me. When I was young it was my mother who taught me manners, table manners in particular, no talking with food in your mouth and no elbows on the table and no pudding if you didn't clear your plate! She taught me to be polite, speak only when spoken to and to watch my P's and Q's. It took me ages to realise that although the P could stand for please, there never was a Q in thank you.

And it was my Mom that showed me by her example how to be courteous; to offer my seat on the bus to someone who was standing, to open doors and certainly not to let it slam behind me, to wait patiently in queues and not push in. And all these things she taught me in love.

She had a fighting spirit, fighting against poverty, hardship and illness. She had a Caring spirit, caring not just for her family but also for others less fortunate than herself. There was always something you could do for the poor she would say. Not much was thrown away in our house. Worn out clothes were turned into dusters. Old shirts had their buttons removed before they went in the rag bag. And the joy of getting a goldfish in a bag from the rag and bone man was so exciting. There were no charity shops then so clothes that we had grown out of were passed to other members of family or to jumble sales. New clothes were the exception and great rejoicing and excitement was evident when that happened, but I digress.

There was a spirit of togetherness, bringing and holding us all together especially after we had left home. She had a spirit of welcome, to family friends, neighbours and strangers. Family gatherings were very important and she loved reunions with the wider family of Aunties and Uncles and cousins, all friends and relatives. As we were growing up and my elder brothers left home, she had enough love in her heart to foster two young girls. They stayed with us and I gained two more beloved sisters.

Her love, unselfishness and generosity seemed endless.

She had a forgiving spirit. I can't count the times I must have hurt her by my words and actions and yet she was always there ready with open arms to forgive us all.

She was my guiding spirit, nurturing me, teaching me. It was from her that I first learnt right

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from wrong and it was Mum that introduced me to the bible and Christian teachings. She had a spirit of encouragement, enabling me to spread my wings and try new things.

She had a healing spirit. When I fell over, with just one kiss she could make the pain go away and make me feel better. A comforting spirit when I was down, she had the knack of lifting us, making things right or at least not as bad as we feared.

She was gentle and kind, patient and tolerant; yet we knew discipline too.

A lot of these characteristics are mentioned in the reading from Colossians for Mothering Sunday.

Today is Mothering Sunday, or as it has commercially and popularly become known as Mothers Day. I think it is a good idea to hold a day each year on which we can say a special thank you to mothers. We have a mother's day for a mother's life. The life of a mother is by and large a record of sacrifice and service. They are the ones who keep us on the straight and narrow, and someone whose love we can rely on. They are nurses, dressmakers, cooks, housekeepers, confidantes, teachers and much more and of course they also rule with a rod of iron.

I would just like to make the connection between the two names. Mother's Day owes its origin to Mother Church. On this fourth Sunday of Lent, every year, often what we call 'Rejoicing Sunday', the church celebrates her motherhood, as mother of many nations and many peoples. In past days those in service were given a day off to visit home and return to their Mother Church.

This is the time of year for baptisms and confirmations and the church rejoices as people around the world prepare for new life in the church. Like any good mother the church serves her children with life, with truth, with faith, with love and forgiveness. This day then became traditionally known as Mothering Sunday and now in this part of the world it has become established as Mother's Day. Perhaps it has become a little too commercialised these days as most mothers are perfectly content with a call or a kiss and a hug from their offspring. It's a bit difficult in the present situation of Covid.

But it gives us an opportunity

As the church building has been closed, I more than ever realise that the church is the people. And the people of our Parish have shown this by their example. Acts of kindness are happening all over the Parish. People are keeping in touch, sharing their love and care and concerns for one another. All these characteristics of motherhood are being brought to the fore. We have a wonderful opportunity to look at our church life and see what is good, what could be better and what we need to change.

I would like you think of your own church now and see if the following qualities are evident
Is everything love based; - everything Jesus/God based?

Does the church fight against poverty and demand justice for all?

Is there a sense of togetherness, fellowship and family?

Do we welcome strangers?

Are we forgiving and accepting?

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Do we guide, nurture, teach and encourage?

Do we offer healing and comfort?

Do we show discipline or discipleship?

Are giving and kind?

Perhaps now is a good time to consider these attributes of Mothers and compare them to our church life.

We are urged to show love as we have been loved. We are urged to respond to one another's needs, to not just sympathise but to do something of a kindly nature, to help our fellow neighbours, whether they are known personally to us or are strangers. We are called to Christian living which encompasses all aspects of love.

Maybe you are not a church goer (none of us are at present) so you too have the opportunity to help us build Gods kingdom anew. Why not get in touch and be part of this new challenge?

In the meantime what can we do today to share these qualities, these acts of kindness and love –?

What can you do this Mothering Sunday in memory of your Mum? Can we make that phone call, write that letter or card; even an email or text shows you are thinking of someone. Can you offer to help with shopping, give to that charity generously, make someone a cake, offer a lift, take someone out, visit the housebound; the list is endless and these are just a few small acts which we can accomplish quite easily. But it must come from the heart; we should not seek thanks or recognition but do it in Christian Love in memory of the love shown to us by our mothers. It is our duty, it is our joy. Think of God's will first, then others needs and finally ourselves.

So I leave you with this message KISS BEN today

(Kindness Is Something Simple, Be Even Nicer) on this Mothering Sunday.

Amen