

Mother's Day

Dear Friends,

I was awake at 5:00am thinking and praying for the mothers in our congregation. What an awesome privilege and opportunity mothers have to nurture and care for children. At the same time, it must be an overwhelming responsibility to love, support and encourage children in today's culture. I not only admire and respect mothers today, but I also pray for you and all the mothers in your life as we plan to celebrate Mothers' Day this weekend. For you, this weekend may bring great joy but for others there will be grief. Be gentle with yourself so that this Mother's Day may be a time for you to cherish.

Each of you will have extraordinary memories of your mother or grandmother during this weekend. Some of you will remember how they taught you to tie your shoes, print, do math and even simple science experiments. Some of you will have memories of your favourite vacation. Some will be able to remember your first day at school as your mom held your hand walking down the road to drop you off at school for the first time. Some will have memories of the look on your mom's face while she attended hockey, baseball, dance, soccer, football, lacrosse, basketball, rugby or track and field. Sometimes it makes you wonder, how did they do it all?

Scripture is very clear as it reflects on motherhood. John 1:4 states "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." It is my experience that most mothers dedicate their lives to filling their children's hearts and minds with wisdom, love, compassion and integrity. God reminds all children of how we should treat our moms. Indeed Leviticus 19:3 states, "Every one of you shall revere his mother and father." One of my favourite scripture passages is Proverbs 31:25-28 that states, "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness." I'm sure you have some extraordinary women in your life and have always admired mothers who exemplify courage, strength, wisdom, kindness, compassion and clemency. I believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus exemplified grace, patience, tolerance, empathy and love for her son.

This year some of you will be with your mom. Some of you will visit your mom in a nursing home. Some of you will either visit a cemetery or simply look at a black and white photo and remember your mom with love and fondness. As we remember our childhood we recall the words of an unknown author, "To the world you are a mother, but to your family you are the world." Many of us were blessed with precious mothers. St Theresa of Lisieux once said, "The loveliest masterpiece of the heart of God is the heart of a mother." I couldn't agree more.

Most recently I read an extraordinary quote, "Acceptance, tolerance, bravery, compassion. These are the things my mom taught me."

I continue to be surrounded in amazing, talented, gifted, dependable moms. If you are one of those mothers or one of those grandmothers and are reading this letter, please know that you have been a source of inspiration and encouragement to the children and grandchildren in your midst. They have seen your love and your faith in action.

Many years ago I learned mothers need moms. Every Sunday at 1 o'clock in the afternoon the phone rang in our home. We all knew it was Grandma calling our mother. This was a sacred hour of conversation between two of my favourite people. I knew the conversation was private. Two faithful, dedicated, loyal and devoted women sharing their joy and pain. I was aware that there was conversation about marriage, raising children and living lives that blessed their families and the surrounding community. Two women sharing advice and caring for each other. Sometimes I could hear laughter, other times I was aware of weeping. There was always a tenderness between the two of them. It was most obvious that their faith and "moral compass" was fully integrated into their conversations. The Sunday the phone didn't ring anymore I was aware that Grandma was gone and something had also died in my mother. Sunday afternoons were silent in our home for a long time. Slowly, my mother's spirits had a renewed joy. She was smiling and hopeful again. It was a mystery for many months until one day she mentioned that she had been having weekly conversations with "your best friend from high school". I was surprised to discover that she was chatting with Joyce weekly while we were dating, engaged and married. Indeed, these two women were in constant dialogue. Mom was thrilled to have a "new" woman to share life's joy and pain with each week. These conversations continued for years until Mom couldn't remember Joyce's name or face anymore. My fondest memories are of these two moms laughing, sharing, crying and planning new adventures together. Moms need other moms in their lives.

As I look through photo albums, memories of my mother and grandmothers flood into my mind. You too may share in the experience of glancing at photographs and suddenly you can hear their words of wisdom, encouragement, and affection. We remember so many "blessings" from mothers and grandmothers today. May I encourage you to celebrate those memories. To each and every mother and grandmother, please know that I will be praying for you this Mother's Day. May God bless you and every life you touch with love.

Blessings
Stephen