

“EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FOR MOTHERS”

Sunday, May 12, 2019 (Mother’s Day)

Mary Lou Prevost -

Happy Mother’s Day! This is a good day! Today is a really good day! Each morning, when I wake up, the first thing I do is to repeat this phrase to myself - “Today is a really good day!” These words help me set my mind on a positive path of appreciation and a reminder of how blessed I am. It just starts my day on a good note.

Mother’s Day is a special day set aside when we are reminded to remember the remarkable person or persons in our lives and express our gratitude to those individuals who are or have been so important to us. Whether your Mother is still here or if she has transitioned from the physical world into the spiritual world, she will always remain a powerful influence through the love she has shown you since the day you first met.

From my prospective, gratitude is the key word. Gratitude is the quality of being thankful and to show appreciation for kindness. Last year our choir sang a song that speaks to us by capturing the true meaning of gratitude. You may remember this song. I know the choir will. I’ll spare you the pain of my singing it and simply read it instead:

Gratitude Changes Everything
A Grateful heart makes all things new.
I give thanks in all things,
knowing my good comes from You.
I am grateful for each new day of life,
I am grateful that I can sing.
I am grateful for friends and family,
For every living thing.
I am grateful for the kiss of the wind on my cheek,
for the sunlight on my face.
I am grateful to know how it feels to be loved,
And God’s amazing grace.
Gratitude changes everything
A grateful heart makes all things new.

And, the last three words in this song are “I am changed”. When we initially were learning this song as a choir, I thought these last three words just don’t fit with the rest of the song. But, I soon realized that it was a perfect ending. Obviously, the composer knew this when he wrote those words. I just didn’t get it at first. Gratitude definitely changes us. There is great power in gratitude.

I was so fortunate to have a very special teacher in high school who was a wonderful mentor and who had made a tremendous impact on my life. After graduation, I realized that I never told her how much I appreciated her and the positive influence she had on me. I always felt sad that I hadn’t told her. Many years later, however, when I was working as the Manager of Human Resources for Oakland County, she came seeking a part-time job, and I was so pleased to offer her a position in our office. A few days after she started, I met with her to express my gratitude for all she had done for me during my high school years and for preparing me for the working world; at which time her display of gratitude for my sharing this with her totally lit up my office as well as the both of us. After so many years had passed, I was so thankful that I finally had the opportunity to share this with her. God works in mysterious ways.

Gratitude changes everything - not only for the one receiving it, but for the one expressing it as well. It releases the energy of life. It changes your heart. While everything else around you changes - the expression of gratitude actually changes us.

Today, on Mother's Day, expressing gratitude is a wonderful way to show our appreciation to our mothers, or those standing in for our mothers, for all they have done for us.

Mothers can be pretty amazing. Not only do they put up with all of our ridiculous antics and shenanigans from childhood to adulthood, maybe I should say, in some cases, throughout adulthood, they usually do so with a smile and, most assuredly with a tolerance beyond belief. They do some other pretty important things too — you know, like spend your entire childhood making sure you are properly fed, clothed, and cared for, putting your happiness before their own, and loving you unconditionally. Mothers are pretty amazing.

Mothers have been described, in part, as compassionate, smart, patient, wise, thoughtful, creative, fun, caring, talented, perfect, strong-willed, intelligent, emotional, critical, surprising, sarcastic, kind, faithful, angry, determined, healer, amazing, role model, hard- working, understanding, practical, complicated, unpredictable, powerful, wonderful, and you could probably add many more descriptive words to the list. But, at the very top of practically everyone's list is love.

One of the greatest acts of love for one's mother can be found in John 19 where we find Jesus dying on the cross. It states in part: He saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, "He is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "She is your mother". Even in the face of death, out of His profound love, Jesus wanted to make sure that his mother was loved, cared for and protected.

This leads me to something I want to share with you about some very special members of our church. And, just for the record, I have received permission from them to do this. A number of years ago, Kathy Burt lost her mother and about that time, Gwen Brooks, suffered the loss her daughter. Sometime thereafter, Kathy visited Gwen and asked if Gwen would be her mother and she would be her daughter. Such a beautiful act of love. This is indeed a perfect example of Kathy following Jesus' teachings of sharing grace and a great love for one another. Gwen Brooks has since transitioned into the spiritual world, but the love and understanding that Kathy and she shared together still remains a part of Kathy's journey. This is a beautiful example of true love being shared and grace manifested.

Oprah Winfred is quoted as saying, "Biology is the least of what makes someone a mother." We find this to be so true through the lives of so many individuals; such as in the lives of Ericka Stoll and Karen and Bruce Ramthun. Ericka lost her father when she was but eight years old and sadly, her mother passed when Ericka was not quite 13 years of age. Out of the profound loss of her parents, a beautiful act of love manifested when her Aunt Karen and Uncle Bruce stepped up to become her guardians. Maybe a more descriptive term would be her guardian angels. Even though Bruce and Karen had recently become empty nesters, they found it in their hearts to claim Ericka as their child and continue to nurture her into adulthood. There is such indescribable, profound unselfish love witnessed here.

On a more personal note, my Mother transitioned when I was 14 months old. Unlike Erica, because I was so young, I have no memory of my mother. On Mother's day and of course, many other days, my thoughts of mother are directed to my grandmother, who raised myself and my brother, who was 4 years old at the time, as though we were her own children. I think of her sacrifice often, partly because she had raised her own five children who were grown and on their own. At a time when she could have been spending her life doing those things she enjoyed, she unselfishly took on two more little kids. My brother was a handful, while I was perfect of course.

How can one ever express enough gratitude for such sacrifices that our mothers and/or our surrogate mothers give so generously?

I have never had any children of my own, but I certainly have done my share of baby-sitting throughout my life. However, I must say that although baby-sitting is a very valuable experience, it just does not prepare you for the challenges and demands of parenthood. Evidently, God decided that I needed to experience parenting, so God blessed me with helping to take care of Linda and Dave's granddaughter, Maddy, from the time she was 3 months old. Because Maddy's parents both worked, we shared the responsibility of taking care of her five days a week and sometimes more. She is soon to be 14 years old now, going on 21. This opportunity has opened my eyes and heart to what it requires and takes to be even a part-time mother, but I would not change this experience for anything and I would do it all again in a heartbeat.

Linda is a mother personified, from whom I have learned more than can ever be found in any book ever written about parenting or anything else for that matter. Though I am older than her, even though I don't look it or act like it, she is so much wiser about so many things that have been life-changing for me. One of those things high on the list is how to be a good parent and role model. She is indeed a blessing not only to me but to all her friends and her entire family.

Linda's mom, Jane Ann Blanchard, who is here today being supportive as a Mom would, came into my life soon after I met Linda in church almost 25 years ago. We have grown very fond of each other to the point of her introducing me as her third daughter, which makes me feel very loved and a part of the family. Linda, Laurie and I call each other sisters, which automatically makes Jane Ann my mother. Makes perfect sense to me.

Sometimes we need a reminder of how profoundly and proficiently God works in our lives bringing us all together like a beautifully written symphony. Perhaps Mother's Day is just one of those reminders. The person or persons in our lives we call mother are true love and grace manifested - love and grace placed there by the hand of God.

Today is a wonderful opportunity to remember our mothers, and, if you are fortunate to still have your mother in your life, don't ever miss a chance to tell her just exactly how much she means to you; because mothers are really pretty amazing!

Happy Mother's Day! This is a good day! Today is a really good day! Amen.