

## A MOTHER'S DAY MESSAGE '2022'

As a mother, have you ever asked yourself what kind of a legacy will you be leaving for your children? And I'm not saying financially, but about leaving behind the essence of who you want them to remember you by? In all honesty, this question never crossed my mind when I was super busy raising my own three boys! I'm sure it's the same for many mothers out there. However, this season of my life being over, and the fact that I'm having more time on my hands, introspection or heart-searching has been more frequent. And as I begin to write this message for Mother's Day, I think of my own mother, and the legacy she has left behind for me and my two brothers.

Sadly, I didn't get to know her since she passed away from tuberculosis when I was only three years old. My older brother was five, and old enough to have kept fond memories of her and him sitting together on the porch of our home where he learned his ABCs and numbers, or listening to her lullabies at bedtime. As for my younger brother, he was only six months old. In fact, mom passed away when she was just a young mom of thirty-three... However, I count myself blessed to have learned from my aunts what kind of a person my mom was. Apparently, she had a gentle, cheerful, energetic and delightful personality. Her great sense of humor, courage, good judgment and kindness were also admired by everyone she came in contact with. I must say that I was very happy to hear that! Unfortunately, her life was cut short; so was her story. However, she still left a lasting legacy as a mother, a wife, and a person. And now, I'm asking myself...what will be mine?

When we first make the decision to start a family, we don't fully realize how much our lives will change after giving birth to our first child, do we? We may have an idea as we watch other moms, but living it is a different thing. A woman who was expecting her first baby emphatically said to me one day that her child will have to fit into HER plans; not the other way around. I would be curious to know how well that went for her...

It's not my intention here to scare the future moms with what I'm about to say, but in reality, children drastically change our lives; want it or not. Babies are supposed to be cute and cuddly, and they are. But they also come with sleepless nights, diaper changes, tummy aches and teething. And when we think we have it hard, then come the terrible twos, way up to puberty, followed by the teenage years with challenges of their own. We come to a point that we seem to focus more on the negative attitudes of our kids than the positive ones, especially when they push our buttons more often than not!

However, there are always these moments that make up for everything. These special, unexpected occasions when our kids show signs that we may be doing something right after all! In my case, it was a note of appreciation for everything I was doing for him and his brothers that he had left on his bed before leaving for school. Or it was a praise that my lasagna was the best one in the whole wide world. And to say they were never ashamed of their mom in front of their friends, even if she didn't speak perfect English, and with a very thick accent at that! Would you have believed your own kids if they would have said that to you? Well, you might think I'm naïve, but I did!

I'm thinking as well about all the wonderful memories my husband and I have built with our three boys! While under our care, it was a time for them to discover, learn, experience new things, and eventually make their own decisions and choices. We were always there to help, guide, and encourage them. We witnessed their struggles and their progress, their failures and victories, their tears and their joys. This is what parenthood is all about!

As parents, our primary concern was to follow God's principles, and to teach them to our children. Since He is the One who created man and woman in the first place, and then said to them..."Go and multiply the earth!", wouldn't we expect that the next logical step should be to give them instructions on how to raise their offspring? Well, He did. I agree there are many self-help books on parenting out there, and I

would not want to discard them all as rubbish. However, I would say that our own parenting style was based on our deep and unconditional love for them, godly principles, moral values, common sense, consistency and fairness in our rules, as well as lots of prayers...

It is a known fact that a mother's job is never done, and a paycheck is not to be expected at the end of the week. There is no bonus at the end of the year, and no path on the back for a job well done. However, I can truly say that those times were the most fulfilling ones of my life. I may not be able to say this, mind you, if my husband would not have been present to assume his responsibility as a father.

It is also true that we cannot always predict how our children will turn out to be in life. I met a mother recently who was telling me that her son had already been in prison a couple of times for drug related charges. My heart goes out to her... I believe that deep inside each mother's heart, there is a desire to make a positive contribution to our children's lives, and each day creates new opportunities to do so. We've been given the tremendous responsibility of raising our family, and when all is said and done, what kind of a legacy will we be leaving for our children? Personally speaking, I hope it will be my unconditional love for them. And if my little idiosyncrasies are also part of it, that will be fine too!

I believe Jesus is the perfect example of what true love really is. He came on this earth to do His Father's will. His whole life, and His sacrificial death on the cross demonstrated His unselfish, unconditional love for humanity. He left us a legacy of forgiveness and salvation, kindness and compassion, as well as humility and perfect love. It is, undoubtedly, the greatest legacy anyone has ever left or will ever leave...

In closing, let me just say to all the moms who stay at home to raise your children, and feel overwhelmed and unappreciated... don't give up! The time and efforts you are presently investing in your children's lives are all worthwhile. So, hang in there!

To the ones who have full-time jobs outside the home, balancing work and family life can be quite challenging and stressful. Young children especially always claim their mom's attention, don't they? I say to you, dear ones... don't be too hard on yourselves for not spending as much time as you'd like with them. As a loving mom, I'm sure you're doing the best you can in these circumstances. And as they become adults, they will understand, and remember mostly the love you showed them in so many ways while they were under your care.

To the women who can still enjoy their own mother's presence in their lives, I say... count yourselves blessed! Take every opportunity to show her your love, affection and appreciation. And if for some reason the relationship between you both is somewhat challenging, I would hope you find it within you to work at it, and turn it into a meaningful one.

For those who have been abused or abandoned in some way or another by your own mother, I would hope that you find the courage to forgive her. I realize this is one of the hardest decisions to make... But yet, as you do, you will realize that forgiveness is really a gift you give to yourself. It will open the door for the healing process to begin.

Lastly, for the ones who have lost a child or their own mother (maybe both), this day will probably be a difficult one for you. I pray that you will find comfort in the fond memories you have of them, and in the support from family and friends. May God bless you in a very special way.

**TO ALL THE MOMS... HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY!**