

A Mother's Love is Divine

By Sister Norma Acaba

Eighteen years ago, my husband Anito and I accepted the invitation from a very persistent religious friend to join the Cursillo. Then we attended the monthly Group Reunion, Ultreya and School of Leaders meetings.

Each sister and brother in the Cursillo shared their life experiences and we witnessed how strong their faith and trust in the Lord is, and we became inspired by their courage and love for God.

They shared the weakness and sufferings in their lives and the joy of overcoming these trials and bearing their own crosses in the family.

There was so much love and joy all around. Together, we cried and laughed, and this sharing became the driving force in the changes in our lives.

Slowly but surely, we began to learn that Cursillo is all about love, about how Jesus is love. Our lives now revolve around living according to the Piety, Study, and Action learned from our three-day weekend.

We are more prayerful than before. We read more about our faith and engage in evangelization within our community, especially with those who have drifted far away from the church.

As a mother to my three boys, I taught my sons to be faithful and truthful in our faith, to be responsible, respectful and not judgmental.

I taught them how to pray the Holy Rosary, and we attend mass every Sunday and Holy days together as a family.

As a grandmother, I do the same thing. One day my grandchildren told me they are taking Catechism classes in preparation for their first Holy Communion. The next time they visited us, I asked our 7-year-old grandson if he did his reconciliation yet.

He cried and told me that he is scared because he has too many sins, a thousand or more, maybe even two thousand.

So, I told him to tell the priest a few of his sins and the priest will forgive all his sins.

“As long as you tell the priest you are really sorry, and not to commit the same sins again,” I told him.

And he did. He was able to pass his classes. He was so proud and pleased with himself that he invited us to his first Holy Communion.

Becoming a cursillista was the best thing that ever happened to Anito and me. We become closer to God than before, and we are aware of it.

We started spreading to others the overflowing love we receive from being cursillistas. We invited more people to come and see.

We will always remember our late Fr. Joe Arong’s favorite song “Hindi Kita Malilimutan” which translates to “I will never forget you” when he talks about the love of a mother and her devotion to her children.

The love of a mother bears all things, believes all things, endures all things, and most of all is eternally faithful. This is how I see my mother.

Mothers do not only bear us, but they continue to bear with us. It is not only the prenatal carrying but the lifelong carrying that makes mothering such a staggering deed.

Of course, there are heartbreaking exceptions, but most mothers understand a sacred trust of the highest order.

A wonderful young mother recently wrote: “How is it that a human being can love a child so deeply that you willingly give up a major portion of your freedom for it? How can mortal love be so strong that you voluntarily subject yourself to responsibility, anxiety, and heartache and just keep coming back for more of the same? What kind of mortal love can make you feel, once you have a child, that your life is never, ever your own again?”

Maternal love must be divine. There is no other explanation for it.

My mother is now* 95 years old. She still loves to dress up, fix her hair, put on make-up, have her nails manicured and wear her favorite perfume.

My mother married my father when she was only 18 years old. She had wanted to finish school, but love and marriage came early in her life.

Her ten children came one after the other in intervals of one to two years.

Despite her busy schedule of housework, childbearing and childrearing, her ambition to finish college never wavered.

She went back to school after her 6th child, taking up night classes to earn a degree in education.

Her semesters were interrupted during childbirth and maternity leaves, but she continued with her schooling until she finished two years of college.

My father has always been a strong supporter of her pursuit for higher education.

Although she lamented that she was not able to get a degree and be a teacher, she can proudly say that, despite the difficulties of combining her job as a full-time mother, wife and student, she has accomplished so much.

All of my mother's children have earned their own degrees and are quite successful in their careers.

My mother loves music and wanted her daughters to learn how to play the piano. She bought a piano when we were still living in Binalbagan Sugar Central in the island of Negros Occidental during the mid 1950s.

Being the eldest daughter, I learned how to play the piano first. My two younger sisters also studied the piano after me. I love to play the piano, but the piano doesn't love me. We have issues. I swear my sisters can play better than me.

But what I excelled in was my love for gardening, which I got from my mother.

She has quite a collection of flowering plants: roses, orchids, bromeliads, euphorbias, lilies, and fruit trees as well.

I have a more extensive collection than what she has in her garden.

I plant what she plants and more. Anito, can attest to this. He is complaining now that our backyard is like a forest.

What I admire about my mother is her strong faith in God. She taught us how to pray the Rosary at an early age. I remember we prayed the Rosary together at night.

She would always pray to God for all her children, attend mass daily and teach Catechism in the nearby public school.

She would storm heaven with her litany of prayers whenever any of her children would take the professional board exam, apply for a job, travel overseas for job, or when her daughters would give birth.

She believes that a mother's prayer is always powerful. I also believe this is true because most of her prayers were answered.

She taught us how to live being frugal by making sure we took care of the things we have, buying only what is necessary, budgeting the monthly expenses, recycling leftover food and using hand-me-down clothes for the next child.

Although our home is small and simple, it is clean and cheerful with splashes of color on the curtains and the seat covers.

She supported our choice of careers and even our future spouses. Anito is her favorite.

She made sure that we are all married in the Catholic Church.

When I go home to Iloilo to visit her, she would not immediately recognize me or remember my name. Surprisingly, she would always remember Anito and would even comment "Anito, guawapo ka pa rin, ah!" which translates to: "You are still handsome!"

Did I mention she had a poor eyesight?

My mother is not perfect. We would sometimes argue over a lot of things. But I realize, now that I am a mother and grandmother, my mother is the best mother ever.

She taught me how to be patient, responsible, loving, generous, prayerful and forgiving.

My mother is bedridden now. She is alone in the house my father built for them in 1992 before they celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

She is being taken cared by a couple of caregivers and my sister-in-law who lives nearby.

From the balcony of her house, she enjoys the fresh air, the view of her garden and the sounds of chickens and chirping birds.

She also loves the fresh vegetables from her garden and fish that her maid cooks for her. She continues to pray the Rosary and recite her litany of prayers she had already memorized.

When her time comes for God to take her home, I pray that Mother Mary will take her by the hand and bring her straight to heaven. There, she will continue to watch over us and pray for us so we can join her and my father someday.

We you love you mom!!!

To all mothers everywhere, thank you for giving birth, for shaping souls, for forming character, and for demonstrating the pure love of Christ.

Whether we're near or far, now or in the years to come, you can be sure your mother's influence is right there every step of the way. There are poems and songs written to honor mothers.

Below is one poem that touches my heart.

M - is for the million things she gave me

O - means only that she's growing old

T - is for her tears she shed to save me

H - is for her heart of purest gold

E - is for her eyes with love-light shining

R - means she's right and right she shall always be

Put them all together to spell Mother, a word that means the world to me.

When sickness takes over, you wander the world as though all companions forsake you.

When the friends you have are not many, and in your pocket, not a penny, there's a mother always waiting and saying, "Come home to me."

De Colores!

*my Mother passed away almost a year now last October 2020. Missed her so much. May she rest in peace. Amen.

