

Traveling Companion: A mother's love is a blessing

Fr. Michael Tracey

A mother's love's a blessing, no matter where you roam,
Keep her while she's living, you'll miss her when she's gone;
Love her as in childhood, though feeble, old and grey,
For you'll never miss your mother till she's buried beneath the clay.

These words of the famous Irish song typifies the love of every Irish mother and how it should be cherished, affirmed, appreciated and treasured before it is too late. Yes, I know it because my mother died on October 23rd, 2004.

Yes, our mother's love was a blessing, no matter where we roamed. We may have roamed to the United States or England or kept close to home. But no matter where we roamed, Mary Kate Tracey was a blessing.

Her faith was unbounded; her trust in God unwavering; her influence unparalleled.

Like all kids, we tested her resolve growing up. In her frustration with our antics and stubbornness, she would often say, "I don't know what to do with these kids. They will drive me to an early grave." We didn't. She survived us.

We all turned out okay. We didn't get in trouble with the law. We didn't smoke. We didn't get drunk. We didn't skip school! We didn't get in fights! We didn't drop out! We didn't get divorced. We just led normal lives.

Mary Kate Tracey's faith was paramount in her life. She may not have known the nuances of theology or read any theology books; but she knew her Maker and that was all that really mattered. Her novena of prayers were not far from her heart; her rosary beads was always close to her hands, always mediating on the mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of her Redeemer.

So often, she lived those same rosary mysteries in her life. Joyfully, she witnessed her children getting married or getting ordained to the priesthood as well as participating in the lives of her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Sorrowfully, she experienced the death of her husband, Willie in June 1981; as well as the death of her brother, John, and sister, Ann, in recent years.

Now, she will experience her own glorious mysteries; her resurrection and journey to her Father.

Our mother's faith was simple but powerful. Her God, her church was central. She took care of the church and the Lord took care of her.

Her life was also simple and uncomplicated. She knew hard work and never fought it. She was as at home baking cakes as making hay in the fields. She was as at home plucking her own home grown hens for a family pot as writing epistles of local news to her children around the world. She was as at home giving orders to her children, no matter how old they were as enjoying their frequent visits when they came on holidays. She was as at home with neighbor and friend as she was with the stranger who often knocked on her door. She was as at home milking cows as searching for bargains in the local town. She was as at home in her appetite for knowledge as she was blessed by the Lord with wisdom. She was as at home in giving homespun advice to her grandchildren as she was in not being ashamed to correct them when needed. She had simple taste but far-reaching influence.

She was proud of her kids and how they turned out, never afraid to discipline them when they were growing up. She respected and accepted with open arms their choices of vocation and soul-mates and made them feel welcome as part of an ever-extending family.

She planted seeds. Wrote a legacy of love. Lived a life of faith and left an example for all of us to follow.

May the Lord bless and keep her; May the Lord let his face shine upon her and be gracious to her and give our mother Mary, eternal peace.