

MOTHER'S DAY, MOTHERING, MOTHERHOOD - WHAT DOES IT MEAN? COULD THE ANSWER BE "MOTHERHOOD IS A PILGRIMAGE OF HOPE"

This year, Father Lihn suggested it would be very meaningful if several of our parishioners shared their thoughts on the theme of Motherhood – what it meant from personal experience, how they saw, thought and reflected on the role and place of mothers and even how Mother's Day came to be.

This led into the journey of writing and speaking but also provided time for intense inward thinking. Yet it was affirming and strengthening as we pondered and reflected, and we have received feedback that others, likewise found our reflections to be supportive, sustaining and an opportunity to listen and reflect on one's own personal experiences.

Thinking back on our time as children, Mother's Day was mostly about our own mothers and grandmothers. For some, such as Susan, it provided a powerful means to revisit Mother's Day, given her mother passed away over 30 years ago, and for her Mother's Day has often been a difficult day tinged with sadness. However, the act of remembering creates space for listening, reaching out and loving our mothers, no matter where they might be.

Writing our reflections also really brought home how we can include others. While Mother's Day is more often than not about our mothers and grandmothers. It can also be for all the women, and sometimes the men, and sometimes the aunts and sometimes the nuns/teachers, and sometimes even children & teenagers, friends or mentors etc who have demonstrated, time and time again, the qualities of "mothering" - nurturing, guiding, teaching, hugging, loving, cooking, caring, urging, picking one up when things go wrong etc. But it seems to us that at its core, "mothering" is about unconditional love and as Luci describes it, a "Pilgrimage of Hope".

We love our children, and we love our young people, and we love our friends, hopefully, unconditionally. While we may not always agree or like what they do, at the end of the day, we are there for each other, with love – we seek nothing in return. Mothers and mothering have at its heart, the desire and want to cherish and enable each and every person to be the very best version possible. There is no one course, no real preparation to prepare one for Motherhood, we take it when it happens, and we give it our best shot. It is a lifelong journey with ups and downs but with huge rewards. It is about creating and building a shared future for our world.

We have chosen to include Audrey Hepburn's words about Mother's Day because they are so apt.

"the most exquisite gown I ever wore wasn't made of silk or satin - it was motherhood itself. Woven from sleepless nights, hemmed in hope, and stitched with infinite love.

A mother's heart expands quietly, gracefully, making room for both fierce protection and tender letting go.

Whether through presence or memory, birth or choice, motherhood is the art of placing your heart in another's hands... and trusting it will bloom.

To those who carry their mothers in memory—may her love be your compass. To those just beginning—know this: in the glorious chaos, you are shaping a legacy of grace. Because true elegance is loving so deeply, your heart learns to live outside your body.

We share with you, some of two reflections that were presented this Mother's Day 2025.

Luci and Susan

REFLECTION 1

“Mothers rarely ask for much, but they deserve everything” - Lennox Hastie

The opportunity to speak about Mothers, “mothering” and Mother’s Day and acknowledge all who are “mothers”, their contribution to our lives and reflect on what and who mothers are, do, enable has occupied a great deal of my quiet time. Mothers are not just those who bear a child but the many more who nurture, guide, teach, love us and have hopes for us.

Mother’s Day can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks and Romans, who often held festivals to honour the mother goddess, Rhea, and Cybele, the great Mother of the Gods.

There was even an early Christian festival known as “Mothering Sunday”. “Mothering Sunday” fell on the fourth Sunday during Lent and was an opportunity for worshippers to return to their “mother church” for a special service. Within the Catholic Church, the position and role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus has special significance and as such Mary is the “Grand Mother” for & of us - she looks after us and we so often turn to her in times of need or wait for her quiet advice and guidance, which so often comes at unanticipated moments & in unexpected ways.

More recently, in the United States in 1870, social activist & poet, Julia Ward Howe, called for a day to honour mothers & their contributions. Then, in 1908, Anna Jarvis, who was just 12yo at the time, organised the first Mother’s Day celebration as a way of honouring the sacrifices mothers make, as well as for her own mother who had recently died. President Wilson in 1914 created a Special Holiday to honour & thank all mothers. Such is its importance Mother’s Day has spread around the globe & is now celebrated in various countries & cultures, each with its own customs & traditions.

Mothers are vital to the human experience. Yes, there was my mother, but I have also been very lucky to have many great, wise, strong, formidable & intelligent women in my life. As I have grown older, I have come to see that these other women, besides my Mum, have taught, nurtured and guided me – in particular my grandmothers; Sr Consoli, a Mercy nun, who was part of my entire education at Santa Maria College, Perth; my close girlfriends who have been there for me in dark days & situations; several women, much older than myself who have been role models for what I would like to be & strive to achieve. Mothers & Mother’s Day is not confined to just my Mum, who gave birth to me & who nurtured & loved me from the moment I came to be – it is also about all people who have fulfilled the remarkable role of providing love, unconditionally; teaching & guiding through words & actions so that I could be the best version of myself. All have believed in me, & that I could be whatever I wanted to be. All did their best to make sure I had the opportunity to do it.

Today, I was reading the Weekend Australian magazine when I came across Lennox Hastie’s contribution “To Mum with Love – A special breakfast for the real hero in your life”. And his special recipe was for Crumpets, but it was his opening paragraph that caught my attention.

“Of all the heroes we celebrate, the ones who often go unnoticed are the mothers – the quiet everyday architects our lives. They stitch the world together, not with grand gestures or shining medals but with small, regular acts of love that are woven into our memories like a soundtrack to our lives we didn’t even realise we were humming along to. That is why Mother’s Day matters, because we often need to be reminded how much they do for us.

Mothers rarely ask for much, but they deserve everything.”

When I was little, Mother’s Day was largely about my Mum. She was quite remarkable, although growing up I didn’t always appreciate this and it was probably only after I became a mother and then again, some 30 years ago, when my mother died from leukemia at the relatively young age of 60, that I stopped to reflect on her extraordinary skills and achievements. My mother had 8 children – 6 by the time she was 28 and 2 more children in the next 10 years. I was the eldest. Thinking back, life was not

easy for her – money was tight, our home was modest, there was little time or opportunity for her to be on her own or be “her own person”. I just remember the huge amount of work she had to do every day - she was always busy; but really with so many children & my father’s work meant he was often away this was to be expected, but I never felt let down or without love.

Mother’s Day was very important in our house; the time of the year when my mother always received a new pair of slippers from my Dad and we gave her drawings, cards, chocolates etc until we were older and could buy her gifts. It was also her “Day Off” – mum was not allowed to do any work.

To me, Mum was “the bedrock, the organiser, the glue,” she set the way our house ran and we just did as we were told, no arguments. Our home was a Catholic home, and we all went to Catholic schools from Gr1 – 12. We knew who we were, what was expected of us, what we believed in and followed but our home was a bit different to many of my friends – there were no holy pictures, crucifixes etc but there was a strong and very much “lived” place for prayer, especially to Our Lady & St Anthony – we needed him as there were often “lost” things. Mum loved the Hail Mary, it was her favourite prayer, and we knew that if things were getting a bit much then she would have a cup of tea and say 3 Hail Mary’s. It was her reset button and gave her respite and resilience. Her faith in God and His plan was just part of who she was.

Thanks to Maureen Rossiter for this joke which absolutely sums up my mother. A new police recruit was asked how he would go arresting his mother. His response, after a pause, was – “Well, I certainly would be do absolutely nothing until back up arrived.”

My old boss described being a parent, “as the lifelong mortgage you never actually pay back” - the job is never done & that is why it is so important and special. I now see Mother’s Day as much more of a celebration of the never-ending act of “mothering” and that it is not limited to just one person or one woman, but it belongs to many. Mother’s Day is a chance for us & all families to celebrate all the various “mothers” in our lives, to show them how much they are appreciated and loved.

So, to all mothers, we salute you and what you do each and every day.

REFLECTION 2

“Motherhood is a pilgrimage of hope” - Luci Quinn

In the gospel of John, the mission of Jesus was to make God known, a God of love. The fourth Sunday of Easter is known as good shepherd Sunday. In the gospel today we are reminded about the intimacy of the relationship between shepherd and flock, and the power of belonging. ‘I know them and when they hear my voice, they follow me’. Jesus used references from the everyday life, of those he encountered to help them come to be able to reference shepherds and sheep, however, he could most certainly use the life of a mother to help express the love of God.

This time about 28 years ago I realised I was pregnant with our first daughter. We have two daughters, now 27 and 24. In welcoming the gift of a child, we also welcomed uncertainty, doubt, fear and mystery. In welcoming our daughters, we were called to expand our experience of the unconditional love of God to our children. Once we say yes to a child our life is changed forever.

A mother is often the first voice that speaks love to the new life of a baby. And from that first breath, we share in the mission of bringing our children to know God and in turn helping them bring the joy of the gospel to others through how they live their lives.

In our faith tradition we believe that God’s grace is revealed to us in sacramental moments. Motherhood is the sacramental life in action every day. We are the storytellers, we provide

nourishment, we heal scraped knees and broken hearts, we forgive, and we teach. In each of these everyday moments our hands, our voice are the hands and voice of God.

As a mother, our life's work is focused on how we are raising our children to fulfil their dreams, live their life abundantly and contribute to the common good. We teach them to be peace makers, to be just, to be stewards of the earth, to be ethical, to forgive. And whilst my daughters don't go to mass on Sundays, I don't believe I have failed in my part of the mission as one daughter practices compassion and care in her work a doctor and I am continually reminded of our youngest daughter's sense of justice and righteousness in her critique of different situations and issues, once telling a bar manager that the name of a cocktail was an insult to young women!

As a mother I have carried my crosses and at different times the crosses of my children. In all I have been blessed with only small crosses, yet I have known sacrifice, sadness, anxious times, exhaustion. Times of complete helplessness where I had no answers.

However, there are also times of the most exquisite deep joy in the glory of life in its fullest expression in the small and the big moments, it could be in the simplest gesture like a hug of forgiveness, a text message or in those chest bursting moments of love and pride when you know you've done something right as a parent.

Family life can be tough, complex and messy in all its human frailty. I'm not sure I've ever confidently said I am a great mother! I'm sure there were times when my kids certainly thought I wasn't a great mum. I've worked full time since our girls were 5 and 3. Was I being selfish or was I showing my children that I was using my God given gifts by living out the vocation I have been called to, that of an educator? Fear, guilt, doubt and a sense of inadequacy can be constant companions of mothers. I have known this. I wonder if the good shepherd ever shared these feelings.

A mother's work is never done. Pope Francis was a great believer in the power of accompaniment, walking alongside each other. I'm sure he had this in mind when he called on the people of God to be pilgrims of hope in the Jubilee year.

Motherhood is a pilgrimage of hope.

When we learn we are pregnant we hope the baby will be ok. Then as toddlers we hope we are doing all the right things and ticking the right boxes and milestones. Then we hope they will be ok at school and be happy and make friends. Then we hope they will not hate us too much when we say no during their teenage years and we hope we have done enough to help them make good safe decisions. Then we hope they will find their pathways or careers and partners who love and cherish them as much as you do. We hope they will move out of home. Hope is a cornerstone of motherhood.

Today on Good Shepherd Sunday we celebrate all those who call themselves mothers, thank them for their selflessness and remind them that they do not walk alone.

For me, I know I am sustained in this vocation because I believe in the silent moments of dawn as I pray on my morning walk, or when I say Amen in receiving Eucharist, or when I see my daughter's faces or hear their voices, the presence of God fills me. I hear God's voice, I am known, I am reminded I am enough and in following God's call I am given the grace to continue to show my daughters, that they don't have to earn God's love, that it is given freely and unconditionally, and they will know this because of how they are loved by their mum.