



**REMEMBERING THE MIRACLE OF OUR MOTHER:  
SACRED WORDS AND WATER**

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This is a special Mother's Day homage to our mother, who with our father, brought us into being, who bathed and baptized us, even in the womb, in the sacred waters of her love, who nurtured us, who knew our needs before we could name or say them and satisfied them with a mother's joy; who taught us the good and godly way, and to always be respectful of the dignity and divinity within us, and who stood us on our feet and urged us to go forth and do good in the world and do honor to our parents and our people.

This is also a libation, sacred words and water, spoken and poured, in remembrance and honor, gratitude and everlasting appreciation of our mother and all the good she gave and left us; and for our father whom she understood and honored as her other half who made her whole and who with her, in love and faith, laid the foundation on which we stood up and stepped forward in the world; and for our ancestors all, who left the rich and resourceful legacy our parents passed on to us.

The meaning of our mother to our brothers, sisters and me is manifold and immeasurable, and to our father, she was no less a giver and sustainer of life and an infinite source of love and good. From our mother I learned: to value work and to work for the good, to practice kindness and loving care; to have sensitivity to others' suffering and the strength to bear and overcome our own; to speak and seek truth; to do justice and be generous; to be steadfast in my faith in the good, but also to work hard and struggle to bring it into being. From her I learned, too, not to be trifling in anything, to

do things well or not to engage them at all, not to be "puffed up with pride" or made small by prejudice, to do good without the expectation of recognition or reward, and to be ever mindful of the Divine.

It was not the cards, flowers and presents our mother appreciated most on Mother's Day, although she clearly and visibly valued all the gifts she received. It was our presence, knowing we were well and with her and our father, seeing us relate well with each other and gently reminding us, if we seemed to have lost any part of a vital lesson they had taught us.

Whatever beauty I know begins with my mother who gently taught me: how to appreciate art, to grow a garden and decorate a room; loving and being loved by loved ones, walking in wonder thru the woods or across fields flowering in spring or growing brown and gold with grain in autumn, meditating on leaves falling and sun risings and making divine meaning even out of the awesome sound of hurricane winds, the roar and roll of thunder and the fierce flash and strike of lightning. Indeed, she and our father called it the wondrous work of the Lord and would have us as children, come to one room and sit and wait in worshipful silence until He, in His own good time, would finish and perhaps afterwards send us a rainbow sign.

Our mother was a deeply spiritual woman; rejecting doctrines that diminish and declare others unworthy, but secure and steadfast in her own faith; Baptist by family tradition, but ecumenical and welcoming by character and conduct; prayerful and not preachy, teaching and telling the "good news" with gentle words and good works;

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one who fed the hungry and defended the weak, welcomed the stranger, comforted the grieving; and gave good guidance to the lost and searching; and who cared for the ill and aged and always leaned towards “the least among us”. And she and our father taught us the same. It was our father who laid the initial grounding in the faith for our family thru teaching directly and masterfully from the Biblical texts in which he was well-versed. But it was our mother who made the narratives and lessons more personal and powerful, the ideas more embraceable and the spirit that informed them a special and sacred blessing for each and all of us.

Our mother loved, honored and gave strength to our father, who was to her always the head of the house and thus, due a special deference. And this was so, even though she worked in the fields as he did, shared equally in their share-cropper’s half, managed the money, paid the bills, gave guidance, instruction and discipline to the children also, and had equal voice and weight in every major decision for our family. It was both a religious and family tradition of formal father deference without domination as they interpreted the Bible, but with obvious allowance for how they actually lived their lives. And our father always showed our mother equal respect and profound appreciation, and when he could no longer be and share with her or endure

the agony of her absence, within a year he seemed to lose the will to live and lay down and rose up to join her among the ancestors.

In remembering our mother, I also think of how she and our father found such joy in farming in spite of its hardships; how they loved to plant and harvest and watch things bud, blossom and bear fruit; how they read signs of weather and changing seasons, of coming ruin and rich abundance; and how they talked into the nite about how much bigger and better watermelons, tomatoes, strawberries, cucumbers and sweet potatoes once were. And they were constantly concerned about the life of the land and the future of farming as they knew it.

Our mother was a wise woman who looked deep into things, who believed in miracles and made them happen, listened with love; meditated at length on problematic and promising days; understood what was confusing to many, if not most and searched for good and answers below the surface, and shared it all freely.

We can never be too thankful nor praise and honor her enough and so, we try as best we can to live our lives building on the firm and righteous foundation she and our father gave us. May we be equal to the faith they put in us, worthy of the love they invested in us, and realize and pass on to our children and others the good they gave and wanted for us.

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