

# In praise of motherhood

To mark Mother's Day, we asked readers to tell us about their moms. Here is a sampling from the many submissions we received.

By Lisa Gabriel Wakeland

I am blessed to say I have two mothers — the one who gave me life and the one who raised me. I was adopted at three weeks of age. When my mom passed away 11 years ago to cancer, I finally felt ready to search for my birth mother, and I found her. She was very much alone and went through so much as a young girl with alcoholic parents.

I cannot express how I feel for this little blonde mama of mine. We recently reunited and I told her as we hugged goodbye that she will never be alone again. This is a poem my mom wrote to my birth mother.

Photo: Lisa Gabriel Wakeland with her birth mother.

*An Adoptive Mother's Thanks to "Woman Who Cared"*

*May I thank you also dear woman  
For the choices you made years ago  
Had it not been for your great sacrifices  
A Mother's love I would never have known.*

*I have prayed for your happiness daily  
'Lo these eighteen years God chose me  
As the one your child, now my daughter  
Was entrusted to for the world to see.*

*I have truly loved her, please believe me  
From the very depths of my soul  
I always asked my Lord to reveal this to you  
Whenever your heart needed to be consoled.*

*Now I ask for your prayers, my dear woman  
As "Our" child is ready to embark  
On a life of her own, so very far from home  
But one she chose dictated by her heart.*

*I shall miss her, Oh Dear God, I shall miss her  
But I know this is the chain of life  
I must let her go, as you did years ago  
For I, too, must make the great sacrifice.*

*Yet I want you to know dear woman  
That I shall always stand by her side  
Tho' not in body but in spirit and  
May Our Savior look down on her with a smile.*

*The only request I ask of you is  
Please remember me in your prayers  
That I may have the courage you showed  
Now that it is my turn to share.*

Barbara Gabriel  
Nov. 4, 1982



By Joan Levy Earle

I was almost 60 years old when I moved back home to live with my parents. My husband was renovating and living at our old farmhouse at the time.

For 18 months, having early morning tea with my mother brought us closer, while watching nightly *Jeopardy* shows gave my parents a chance to see that their eldest had inherited some of their smarts!

God called dad home four years ago when he turned 90, so mom struggles through her days alone, full of arthritis but still capable of looking after her daily needs. This beautiful woman, who looks 10 years younger than she should, knits afghans, sends loving cards to grandchildren, anticipates the birth of her sixth great-grandchild and loves to keep up with the news of the world.

Like others her age, mom worries about the way in which the end of her life will come. Her nightly rosary includes a request that the Lord "come gently" when He calls her home. We pray the same prayer for her at every Mass.

By Juliette Ling

When asked what she wanted for Mother's Day one year, mom replied: "Peace and quiet." So that Mother's Day she got just that. A wrapped gift box containing two cards, one with the word "Peace" written on it and the other with the word "quiet."

By Ann-Marie Parisi

"You've arrived just in time. Come and crack these eggs into the bowl," my mother said. My parents were celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary. And no family celebration was complete without the mouth-watering Italian specialty — pizzelle waffle cookies.

"Add the sugar now. And make sure you beat the batter until it's light and fluffy," my mother cautioned.

This recipe had been lovingly left to us by my Nonna Maria. When I was growing up, I remember coming home from school and entering Nonna's home, basking in the wonderful aroma of pizzelle cooking on the stove. My friends loved to visit me at my grandma's house since they always left with a bag of pizzelle.

"Don't forget the vanilla and the lemon flavouring," mom reminded me. I remember special celebrations like my 21st birthday when we would finish our elaborate meals and sit around the

table munching on these family favourites. Pizzelle was also a must-have travelling item. Forget the toothbrush, that was forgivable. But forget the pizzelle, that was a calamity. Heaping piles of pizzelle were carried into the restaurant to help us celebrate my mom and dad's anniversary. Good food, great conversation, loving family and friends, and mom's pizzelle — the stuff of which amazing memories are made.

Photo: Three generations come together: Rita, Ann-Marie and Liliana.



By Christine Pang

My mom passed on over 40 years ago. However, my memories of her never fade.

In my eyes, she was perfect. She taught us to be honest, true, be contented and always try our best. We should treat others well, be fair, and never exploit others. She never pressured me to do things beyond my means.

She was brought up in a Catholic family. I am proud to say that all my grandparents and parents from both the paternal and maternal sides were Catholics, thanks to the foreign missionaries who brought Christ to remote towns and villages. I would like to share words from a card I received long ago:

*Your Mother still is close to you, as she will always be,  
in your heart she will remain, a precious memory.  
And though you miss her deeply  
yet it comforts you to know  
her love lives on to bless your years  
No matter where you go!*

By Eliette Campeau

Mothers hold the memories of their children. She is the one that holds the family together! She creates love among its members and keeps the family united.

Bless God for mothers!!!



By John Marchand

My mother did not discover the cure for cancer. She did not write the great Canadian novel, nor did she ever appear in a newspaper headline. Her entire wardrobe would have fit nicely in a piece of carry-on luggage.

She did, however, care about people. She cared for her husband, her children and her grandchildren. She cared deeply for her faith, for God and the teachings of the Church.

As her children grew and began to need her less, she set her sights on other people who did. She donated to children in the third world who had no food, to organizations helping teens, to foundations and other worthy causes galore. And I never saw a birthday without my card, my \$10 and her chicked-scratched "God Bless."

My mother didn't need to be right and didn't need to get her way. Her life never seemed to be about her — ever.

In the days surrounding her funeral, large numbers of people came to pay their respects. I listened in awe as they recounted stories and shared memories of my mother, many of which I had never heard before. I listened to people explain how much she mattered to them.

I had no idea how many lives this uncomplicated woman had touched, how many people aside from her husband and children would miss her. Albert Einstein once said that "only a life lived in the service of others is a life worth living." My mother knew this and lived it. She made a difference.

By Sandra Antonello

Mamma lived her Catholic faith from the heart, outward. She was conscious of the awesome responsibility she had to pass onto her five children the faith of her Baptism. Mamma believed that faith needed to be nurtured and so tended the fragile seedlings of faith in us as children much like a gardener tends his exquisite perennials.

Our prayers were taught to us by our bedside first in Italian, later we learned them in English. So much of what we knew in how to be the best we could in society did not come from any books on methodology but by imitating our parents, mamma during the day because she was in the home while our dear dad worked shifts.

Mamma had a sense of humour which often had us in stitches so to speak, just by listening to her laugh and seeing her shake like a bowl full of jelly. In this gentle but firm in discipline woman, was the gift of selfless giving not only to my siblings and I but to our neighbours as well. She practised the corporal works of mercy and made us aware that this was what God wanted from us. Spiritually, life for mom was a prayer. She trusted God with her whole heart and taught us to live by the maxim "If God wills..." which meant do all things well to the best of our ability and put the rest in God's hands. She left her children the gift of undying faith, which means despite changes beyond our control God is ever present in our lives. As my brother Mario, who suffers from Alzheimer's tells me again and again: "I wish you knew my mother. She was a saint!" I answer, "Yes Mario I knew her well!"

By Theresa Matys

I sit at the foot of my dear mother's hospital bed on the eve of her 98th birthday. Rosary in hand, she is recovering from surgery for a broken hip. Many memories flood my thoughts.

A devoted wife, mother and grandmother to 50 grandchildren, great and great-great grandchildren. Her life has been one of self-sacrifice and steadfast devotion to her family and her faith.

For so many years, she would trudge along Dundas St. carrying home the altar linens from our parish church to be washed, starched, ironed and returned. An act of charity unseen by others. As president of her CWL she carried out her terms with a quiet and simple dignity and perseverance.

She possesses a serenity fostered by her faith and her unconditional love of her family. They in turn revere her. Her sense of humour shines through the bleakest of events.

To quote a younger senior in the home where mom lives: She is an inspiration to us all. I celebrate the life of Carmela Camilleri.

Photo: Carmela Camilleri with three of her great grandchildren.



By Mary Sama Deva



I was born in a family of eight in a small village.

My father was a teacher in a Christian school that was located a long distance from our home.

There are many memories about my mother but the one I'd liked to share is about the time she rescued her eight children during a major flood in 1947.

A monsoon rainstorm hit our village and a flood rushed into our small house. At that moment I saw courage in her eyes and her faith in God. Instead of panicking she took us on wooden rafters that floated in the flood waters and took us to higher ground. To this day I still admire my mother's love, affection and dedication toward her children.

I am a mother of three children and a grandmother of seven still trying to teach them the good Christian faith and values.

By Inez Meleca

How did mom maintain her commitment to nurturing her seven children with a Catholic faith in the face of our frequent grumbling? Dad worked day, afternoon or night shifts at INCO.

How did she ensure that he got a sound sleep, and that we did not disturb him or our tenants? We were rarely bored for we were gifted with a mother who encouraged us to discover the wonderful adventures in books.

An ardent reader, she provided Bible stories, comic books, mysteries, biographies and we loved them all. As we matured, she often shared tidbits from authors like Thomas Merton and Bishop Fulton Sheen.

She's struggling right now as she loses her precious eyesight to macular degeneration, but she rarely complains. She thanks God for her 83 years of sight and focuses on solutions like accessing audio tapes.

There are special times that I remember fondly, like the warm summer mornings walking home from Mass arm in arm with her. I cherish the memories of cuddling close to her at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help devotions with the lovely hymns and sparkling candlelight and praying the rosary.

Raising my own three children has been challenging. Thank you, mom, for your daily prayers, celebrating my successes and consoling me in my hardships. I am so grateful for your sacrifices, love and example.

By Majella Atkinson

My mother came to Canada from Ireland at 20 years of age. She had 12 children and remained forever loyal to her Irish heritage and Roman Catholic roots.

My mother worked tirelessly to raise us in the faith and to have us attend Catholic schools. She never missed Mass, even though it was difficult for her to get in to the nearby town from the country setting where we lived.

She was the anchor of our family and found her strength in God. She led our family through five decades of the rosary every single evening no matter what the day had held. Mother prayed constantly for everyone but herself.

My mother was a rare and genuinely good person throughout her life. She loved to sit and relive stories about her young life in Ireland, or to simply sit and listen to any concerns we had in our own lives and would always end with "say a wee prayer."