

My Dear Friends of St. Lawrence -

Happy Mother's Day!

Like so many of you, I really wish that I could physically be with my dear mom this Mother's Day weekend, but due to the quarantine restrictions, I am unable to :(For the first time ever, I had to send flowers to her via 1-800-Flowers - which is something I'd never ever imagined I'd had to do. Also, I wish that I could personally greet all of you wonderful mothers out there this upcoming Sunday at the Masses, but we are left with no other choice but to do so remotely; for that, I'm so, so sorry!

Mothers are great aren't they? My own mother, Lydia is my personal hero and I'm sure that your own mothers have also proven themselves to be heroes to many of you as well! After all, they had to change us and bathe us and cater to our every beck and call - the little bawlers and stink bombs we once were! But they did so out of love and their patience was nothing short of amazing. And then as we entered our years as growing children and teenagers, they were responsible for making sure that we did our homework, made the grade, stayed out of trouble and monitored virtually each and every aspect of our little lives for our well being. I am aware that some of you did not have the presence of actual biological mothers in your lives, but perhaps you had grandmothers, or aunts or stepmothers, or foster mothers or even older sisters who played the role of *mother* throughout the duration of your upbringing. To ALL of them, we salute them and we honor and cherish their unwavering love and dedication!

Many people ask me why I became a Catholic Priest. Well, obviously, that "call" came from a higher Source. However, my mother played an integral part in my decision to dedicate my life to God as an ordained/Sacramental Minister. My influence to follow my vocation to the Priesthood did not materialize as a result of the good examples of other Priests or Nuns (although, they most definitely did have a pivotal role). Rather, I must attribute my pursuit to the Ministry to Lydia. It was she who took me to Mass (often, kicking and screaming) and impressed upon me the importance of going to church and saying my prayers. When my family took vacations, the first question she'd ask at the front desk of the hotel was, "where is the nearest Catholic church?" Sure, my dear father and I would sigh and cringe, but for my mother, church came first - it was her primary concern. Even during summer recess from school, while my dad was at work and I was left at home with my mom, she would make it a point to take (drag) me to daily Mass. While there was no obligation whatsoever for me to attend daily Mass,

my mother realized that while I was a physical, psychological, moral, biological and intellectual person, I was also a *spiritual* person! She knew that I had to be physically fed and properly nourished, exercise good hygiene, clothe myself appropriately based on the season and exercise. As a psychological being, I had to be nurtured with love, affection and tenderness. As a moral person, she had to ensure that I was obedient to my elders, practiced sound ethics with respect, compassion and integrity. As an intellectual person, she had to stay on top of me to make sure that I was studying and keeping up with whatever my teachers expected me to achieve in the classroom. And as a *spiritual* person, Lydia had to make sure that my relationship with God was where it needed to be.

As time went on, her personal example and lessons grew on me. When I was a rebellious teen (and we all were, right?) she used to say, "Eric: whatever you do in life as an adult in the future is your business. But the one thing - the most important gift I wish to leave with you is that you go to church so that you can cultivate a meaningful relationship with God; may you always treasure the gift of faith which your father and I have handed down to you." Well, those weren't her exact words of course, but that general message stuck with me and that message never left me.

My mother's wish for me was not to succeed in order that I might become a millionaire or cure cancer or drive a fancy car or achieve notoriety. No. She just wanted me to be happy, but she **knew** that the only way for me to be truly happy was to have faith in Jesus Christ and His Catholic Church. She was right! As a result of my upbringing, my thoughts always fell back to what she taught me and the advice she left me with. It was not that my mother wanted me to become a Priest - she just knew that happiness ultimately comes from God and from God alone! Isn't that the truth, Lord have mercy!!! Suffice to say that when the day came that I informed her that I was going to enter the seminary and study for the priesthood, she was elated ... however, even if I would have announced to her that I was going to pursue something else, she would have been equally elated because my mother's love for me was (and is) unconditional. In the end, all that mattered to Lydia was that I maintain a life of prayer rooted in The Good Lord, **regardless** of what I would eventually become.

I do not consider myself to be a beautiful person, but if there is any aspect of beauty inside of me, well, I must give credit to (GOD FIRST, NATURALLY) and to my lovely mother, second! Lydia, with the grace of God Almighty, provided me with the tools necessary for finding my niche in life and for making that "niche" a happy place for me. It just so happens that God guided

me to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ! Yes, a mother's love is wonderful indeed, isn't it?

This Mother's Day weekend, please make it a point to profusely extend gratitude to your own mothers (or those who have played the role of a mother in your life) and continue to shower them with words and gestures of affection and love. For those of you whose mothers have gone back to God, please thank Him for having blessed you with great, great mothers - women who touched your hearts and souls!

May God bless you now and forever!

Happy Mother's Day,
~Fr. Eric