

Reflection for Mother's Day 2019

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Rev. Renee was the first to ask me to step up to the pulpit and my first reflection was on Father's Day.

It seems appropriate that my first sermon without her be for Mother's Day

As some of you may remember, my mother passed away in 2015. It was a difficult intense time for me.

The cancer took over quickly and the months the doctor said she had dwindled to just a few short weeks.

My mom was the cutest thing ever. She was little and tiny in stature but big in personality. Everyone loved her. I felt like I always took care of her but it was only my imagination. She was always there for me.

I never truly appreciated my mom until I had my own child. I asked her once how she kept the house so clean with 4 children because I couldn't manage with one. She said Oh; I just got up every day at 4 am to clean before you kids got up. I blame my mom for my bad housekeeping habits because our house was always magically clean. I know now I was very spoiled. Luckily, for me, it didn't end. When Kelly was a baby and I was a working mom, often I would come home to a clean house, and all the laundry done. This always happened when my mom filled in for the babysitter, but it also happened when my mom wasn't busy at her house. She and dad would come by and actually be gone before I got home. Best time ever was when she stayed for two weeks to fill-in during the babysitter's vacation. That time I came home to clean house, clean laundry and best of all, a potty-trained two year old.

My mom was the nicest person ever; she was so nice, that even the people she didn't like thought she was their best friend. I said this once in front of my sisters-in-law and I could see the look of question on their faces...I'll never tell...hee hee

The thing I never really understood about my mom was how she survived what she did and still became this happy, cheerful person.

As many of you know, my mom was Japanese. She was born in 1929 into a well-to-do family, my grandfather was an engineer. She was 10 years old when WW II started. She lived through her mother committing suicide because she was ill and in great pain. Medicines were strictly for the soldiers. She had to run through the fields to escape the bombs that destroyed

her home. She lived on potatoes dug from the ground because other foods and rice was reserved for the soldiers. After high school, she planned to take training as a singer but instead she had to train as nurse. Eventually, she married an American soldier and left everything she knew behind. She never saw her father again as he passed away shortly after she went left. My father's mother was very unkind to her as she was a foreigner and was not a Roman Catholic. My grandma never changed in her attitude towards my mom. My mom lost two babies, the first and the last. She scrimped and saved and managed when we had serious financial issues. Through it all, she never showed us anything except a happy loving face.

I am by nature a pessimist so I feel like I would had a problem getting past any one of those things but my mom seemed to rise above all of it.

As an adult, I did my best to show my mom I really did appreciate her. It was never truly enough.

At the end, I felt that I missed so many opportunities and was resolved to do as much as I could for her.

At the end, she really just wanted our presence so I was there every day and every minute possible.

It was still a shock, when she passed so quickly. A few days before she died, she asked for fried chicken to eat. Prior to this she ate very little and only very soft foods like puddings. I worried about her choking and continued to feed her pudding. She didn't complain. My husband took matters into his own hands and when out and brought back a bucket of KFC. My mom happily ate two pieces. I don't say this often but I am glad he ignored me.

The morning of the day she died, I knew she was nearing the end. I cancelled her doctor appointment and called hospice care to come. She was sitting in her chair very quietly and not moving. Afraid that she had had a stroke or something, I said mom, smile for me. She looked at me and gave a great big smile.

The Hospice nurse came and the first thing she did was to show me how to administer liquid morphine. She had me give mom a dose right away because she was uncomfortable. While Dad and I did the paperwork with the hospice nurse, Dave and my brother Tim sat with my mom. She asked to move because she wasn't comfortable. They tried the bedroom but mom didn't want to lie down so she sat in a wheelchair with Tim and Dave supporting her. The hospice service brought a hospital bed so Dave and Tim went to help set it up so my sister-in-law Patty and I sat with mom. Mom was very very still. I called for the hospice nurse and she

checked mom. She was still with us. The bed was set-up and my dad went to get sheets. I was holding mom and she seemed so light in my arms. I called for the hospice nurse again and this time she was gone. I called for dad to come in but he was focused on getting sheets on the bed. Patty and I yelled Stop Dad. Dad stopped and was silent. Is she gone, yes Dad. He came in and we left him alone with Mom.

At the funeral, I was surprisingly calm. I assumed it was because I had cried every day as we drove back and forth to see her that last month of her life. At the end of the service, I witnessed sealing of her ashes. Then I carried the container of my mother's ashes out to burial niche. I had assumed my dad or one of my brother's would do it but they didn't want to so it was up to me. I was especially grateful for the women who walked with me. I will never forget that love and support. I was glad it was me that carried her out. I am glad I was able to do this one last thing for my mom. She carried me all of my life and I was grateful I could be the one to carry her at end of her earthly life to beginning of her eternal life.

Happy Mother's Day, mama.