

The Lily Pad

“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” Solomon 2:1



MOTHER'S DAY - PINK, RED, OR WHITE

Among the many decisions I will make as I ready for church this Mother's Day morning — which lipstick to apply, what treat to bring the young people, where do I want to go for Mother's Day brunch.



Which color flower will I pin to my bodice? As Mom to **Marissa, Biancha, Sophia, and Nicolas**, I joyously will wear a pink flower. As a daughter, what other color flower will I wear - red or white? If I follow tradition, I will also pin a white flower to the bodice of my Mother's Day dress. These fragile white petals conveying a heavy truth shared by many today: ***My Mother is gone. But the memories are here.***

It is a Mother's Day custom born a century ago that for many people, endures. The American incarnation of Mother's Day was created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 and became an official U.S. holiday in 1914.

Those whose mothers are dead, commemorate by wearing white flowers; those whose mothers are alive celebrate with buds of red. White carnations were passed out 102 years ago at this country's first official Mother's Day observance, in a little church in the West Virginia hamlet of Grafton, home of the holiday's founder. Humble and sturdy, back then the white flower honored mothers both living and dead. It's said that florists later introduced red flowers as a symbol for the living.

For nearly five decades, I had known the joy of wearing a vibrant crisp red rose or carnation in honor of my mom, ***Sister Emma Lee Griffin***. However, Mother's Day 2015, would begin my life's journey of wearing a white carnation as a badge of courage and heart wrenching loss. So, Mother's Day 2019, as I once again completes the flower ritual, I will once again don the color white, at least I'm supposed to.

Humanity will not live forever. Memories help to sustain us. But sometimes, memories that lift you up can just as easily pull you under. I remember as if it was today:

Mother was a strong devout faithful praying Christian woman. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me", was her life's foundation. Making breakfast and dinner for my brothers, Eric, Anthony, my dad, Reverend Willie Griffin and me, looking after us and our extended families, gave her joy and purpose and made her a modern-day Virtuous Woman -

“Who can find a truly excellent woman? One who is superior in all that she is and all that she does? Her worth far exceeds that of rubies and expensive jewelry. She inspires trust. She wraps herself in strength, carries herself with confidence, and works hard, strengthening her arms for the task at hand. She reaches out to the poor and extends mercy to those in need. Clothed in strength and dignity, with nothing to fear, she smiles when she thinks about the future. She conducts her conversations with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is ever her concern. She directs the activities of her household, and never does she indulge in laziness. Her children rise up and bless her. Her husband, too, joins in the praise, saying: “There are some—indeed many—women who do well in every way, but of all of them only you are truly excellent.” Charm can be deceptive and physical beauty will not last, but a woman who reveres the Eternal should be praised above all others. Celebrate all she has achieved. Let all her accomplishments publicly praise her.” Proverbs 31:10-31(paraphrased)

She was a gifted cook and an amazingly talented baker. She had a soothing compassionate voice, “Blessed Assurance” was one of her favorite hymns. She had wisdom far beyond her years and never guided me in the wrong direction. She wanted more for her daughter than working in a factory next to her, as she had done with her mom. Joining the Navy was her blessing and gift to me. She got to visit and experience places in the U.S. and the world that transformed her rural South West Georgia life. With promises that I would fall down, and yes even fail in life, was strengthened with “don’t stay down, get up and try again, for if you make one step, God promises to make two.” No matter where I was in the world, Mother guaranteed me that she would forever be with me, “when you feel all alone, put your arms around you, squeeze tight, and know that’s my love” – oh, how I have done this gesture infinite times over these last four years!

Sometimes you will pose for pictures with your flower, giving you something tangible to treasure after the flowers have faded. So, this Mother’s Day, which flower, red or white? If I wear red, I can hear some folks saying, ‘Her mama died, didn’t she? Doesn’t she know she’s supposed to wear white?’ Nevertheless, I see my mom as always being a living part of me.” To wear white “would mean she’s gone forever.”

At the end of the day, as I look with hope and love as I purchase my flower, I’m thinking hard about the message I’m sending myself with the flower I’ll be buying. Is the symbol of the white carnation something I use to make the day sadder than it needs to be? Every day of my life has been in honor of this virtuous woman, her selfless sacrifices, commitment to family and humanity, and her unwavering faith in and knowledge of God’s holy word. **My Mother is alive because my Mother lives on in me.**

I pray to leave something of myself behind, and something of Mother as well, since there are so many ways she made me who I am. I have influenced some lives for the better, people of all ages, cultural traditions, and beliefs. Something of me will live on, as I more intentionally pass on whatever knowledge or wisdom I feel I have to offer.

White or red carnation? Suddenly, I find myself wanting to embrace the other two colors, pink and red, as a way of expanding my identity and my sense of self. My Mother **DOES** live on in me. I have been a spiritual mother to dozens if not hundreds of people. I feel a strong need to recast my approach to Mother's Day, rejecting to let the day be a grief trigger forever.

As I ponder my choices, I think - a red carnation, yes, that will adorn my dress bodice – in honor of my phenomenal Mother that lives in me. Pink carnation too, of course, the blessing of being fruitful – thank you God for **Marissa, Biancha, Sophia, Nicolas**, and all the lives you've allowed me to touch. And yes, white, for the loving memory of the most faithful committed Christian woman, who God blessed me with and who I call Mother. Wearing a white carnation means knowing for my Mother, the battle is over, and she is wearing a glorious crown. **“Keep close to Jesus, Lady”** and **“I’m so very proud of you”** are lasting heart keepsakes that motivates me to be the best that God calls me to be.

What color flower? I will pin all three-colored flowers on the bodice of my Mother’s Day dress –

MY PAST! MY PRESENT! MY FUTURE!

Happy Mother’s Day

*Pastor Clarissa, Martín,
Marissa, Biancha, Sophia, Nicolas,
Cookie, Hachi, and Sadie*





PILGRIMAGES IN THE STEPS OF PAUL

April 22, 2019 – May 6, 2019

I look forward to sharing this breathing-taking pilgrimage in

Greece, Turkey, and Italy to explore the cultural backgrounds of the New Testament. This pilgrimage will acquaint me with the geographical and cultural settings of the New Testament.

ARRIVEDERCI !!

