

Four Mothers

By Richard Burke



That Pentecost is a celebration of the birth of the Catholic Church, it's no stretch to consider there's no coincidence to the the timing of Mother's Day.

In our immediate family, at least four mothers exemplify the spirit of Pentecost (whether they are aware of that likely doesn't matter). According the beginning of The Church, "The Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and their followers and each began to speak in tongues. Despite the fact many had no common language, they were perfectly able to understand one another."

Our moms, in fact all moms, understand the spirit of motherhood – their first priority is caring for their children, even when the children are well into adulthood. In fact, they never stop caring for their children, and others.

Two of the mothers are failing – one at 95 years, the other in her 90th year. Neither ever expected to live this long, but surely it is a bonus – long life has prolonged what they view as their primary role – they continue caring about their children's welfare.

One has a growing list of physical ailments, and can express that pain as a constant. She has been in and out of hospital several times in the past few months. She endures, with her intense need to be as independent as is possible. She doesn't want to be a burden.

When she could, the other mother expressed the same sentiment – family is number one and it's her role to make sure all in the family are OK, but don't fuss over her. She is unable now to express anything orally. She hasn't spoken in a couple of years, at least. She is only mobile in a wheel chair. You still know she cares.

Both mothers are loved unequivocally and unconditionally by two other mothers, their daughters and primary caregivers, in a sort-of role reversal. Other daughters, and granddaughters, most of whom are mothers themselves, also get it. Mothers are caregivers. That's just what mothers do. It's not that they don't do anything else, but when particular caring is needed, it just kicks in with moms.

And, the Pentecostal symbols – wind, flame and dove, representing the Holy Spirit – are certainly all present in moms. They are the wind that keeps the fire burning through the Holy Spirit.

Thanks, moms.