

Mother's Day: Just Another Day?

For 25 years I was an active mother pursuing my favorite role in life: parenting a child, a son, my only son, or as my son would say, being the Charlie Chan fan that he was, "Your Number One Son"! But that role ceased in the wee morning hours of May 3, 2002, in all ways but memorially and symbolically in my heart. The way the world views and celebrates motherhood, especially our nation on Mothers' Day is most often in one of two ways. Either you are the child remembering your mother who may be alive or not, or you are a mother being remembered and celebrated in some way by your alive children. This second option is no longer available to me or to others like me, those who have no living children--those who are now childless. Nonetheless, I am still a parent, a mother, full of love for my child but one no longer able to demonstrate and lavish that love on the object of my motherhood: my son. Nor can I receive love from my child in the concrete ways that Mother's Day seems to demand. I grieve terribly for him on Mother's Day----but no more on that particular day than I do on the rest of the 364 days of the year! Admittedly, this perspective may change as I travel more distance down grief's road and Mother's Day as a special day may weigh more heavily on me, but right now, at almost two years without my Donne, I miss him so much each day that no one single day hurts more than another.

As a family, albeit a small one, but nonetheless a cohesive loving family of three, my husband, son, and I acknowledged special days, holidays like Mother's Day, of course, but one of the most memorable and nicest trademarks of our family life together, I think, was the fact that the 3 of us knew in our hearts that all days, even the most regular and routine of days, were "special". We called them "regular life days", and we always said we loved these regular life days more than holidays! For us, holidays as such, were only really remarkable in that we did different activities on them. My husband had begun a quasi- philosophical tradition of "Everyday Is a Special Day" very early in our life together when he openly declared it to be so, and then lived this philosophy out demonstrating each day as special. This family credo became our excuse to do or say anything fun as a family we wanted: i.e. go to a movie on a weeknight, go out to dinner on the spur of the moment, order in a pizza, watch a late movie, play a silly game, buy a neat toy or gift, all for no particular reason except that the day was Special! "Aw, why not?" my husband would say, "Today is S-p-e-c-i-a-l!", mimicking the Church Lady character on Saturday Night Live. And, on a deeper level, indeed, it was special because on that day we had our lives, we had each other, we were together as a unit, --no one of us was missing.....yet. Thus, our son grew up saying to me, "Aw, gee, Mom, let's do it. Today is s-p-e-c-i-a-l ya' know!" And to our great delight, he incorporated this philosophy into his own young manhood and life feeling and making everyday "special", whether going to work, doing chores, hanging out, etc. He knew in his heart and soul that the day he had was special. He was conscious of making memories. His high school friend wrote to us shortly after his death, "Donnie was somehow able to realize, as most children aren't, that youth is short, that life is short, and that memories are precious. This early awareness of life's transience was something definitely unique about him."

Thus while my husband and I still have our aging mothers with us on this earth, and we acknowledge the loving blessing their presence is in our lives, our own personal Mother's Day and Father's Day contains no more pain of our child's absence than any other day and is no

more "special" in that way to us than any other. Indeed, because every single day was a "special" day when our son was with us, so now every single day without him is likewise equal in its special unrelenting sorrow. That is to say, when your cup is full and brimming over with sorrow everyday, there is no room for more on any other day. Quite simply, I am full-up with sadness today and everyday. So it is that Mother's Day is just another day to me. It might be called Mother's Day, Smother's Day, Valentine's Day, whatever. The name of the day does not change the heart cracking ache I now carry everyday at all times and in all places.

By Donnie's Mom, Kathy Barrett