

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 1992.

Dear family,

The adventure of life continues! As I recall, Jim had been born, we were in our own home, and now we were 5 in number. For whatever reason, Jim had troubles keeping his food down. Often I had to feed him slowly and ended up not having enough milk and had to resort to the bottle. Too bad! Nursing a baby has a wonderful bonding effect and it does get you off your feet. When Mike came along, it was sometimes impossible to sit and bottle feed. That's when the propping of bottle learned in training, came in handy. When Mark came along, there was no way keeping up with demands. Washing and drying diapers alone was time consuming. Those were the days without automatic washer and dryer. Needless to say, that was only a small portion of the wash with so many beds to be changed, towels etc. The sick babies were a real bane in life! Half nights of sleep, trips to the doctor and towing other kids along, (where does one get a sitter in the middle of the day?) plus all the other chores of being a housewife and mother. Your Dad was a tremendous help but he had a family to support and a job to go to everyday. Weekends he was very good about getting up with you. Some of the tougher nights he was up, too, especially when 2 or more of you were sick at the same time. Remember the bunk beds? When the top bunk let go of his cookies, that usually ~~went~~^{meant} 2 bunks had to be changed. Soaking soiled linen in the middle of the night was not my favorite occupation.

You might well ask why I did it? Why have a large family under such extreme conditions? Having been brought up with a conscience and fortifying the ideals of Catholicism in college, the only form of birth control I was about to use was rhythm. Having had irregular periods all my life, I was not always sure when I was ovulating. My spouse was not a demanding person for sex and to this day, I can't understand why 8 of you were born. I can understand Mike being so close to Jim. From the onset of that original bleeding until 6 weeks after Jim was born, there had to be complete abstinence and a healthy couple misses the intimacy that binds a marriage. The Church teaches us that marriage is a sacrament and that act of intimacy is a source of grace for us. Those wants have to be met just as food has to be supplied for nourishment for the body. I'm sharing this part of me with you for you to better understand your mother. Each time I realized I was pregnant, I was scared stiff! How was I going to cope when my life was already full to the brim. Each day had only 24 hours! I knew I could not do it alone. Somehow God helped me cope. Putting the problem in His hands and having confidence that I could do it, the miracle was accomplished with each additional pregnancy.

Hopefully none of you feel that you were neglected in an essential way. Naturally I would have preferred to have more time to enjoy you in your formative years. As I recall those precious moments of you as infants and the time we did have---say at bath time---, I well up with pride and tears remembering the softness of your skin, the blowing bubbles on your tummies, those gorgeous buttocks, the giggles in your happiness, the pulling of the hair (sometimes painful!) when the face got too close, and most especially the hugs and kisses! I was painfully aware of what I missed in having Tom. With him I had time to be there for him. Mary and Teri said I spoiled him and perhaps they were right. You are all my babies but Tom being the youngest got the most attention from me. It does not make him better than any of you as a person. You are all terrific! You have no idea yet (until your kids are grown) what joy, satisfaction, and pride I feel in having borne you. Dad and I can stand tall and be proud of you children! We had your cooperation in formation of your character, maybe set up some road blocks you would preferred not to have in your life, tried to be examples and models as good citizens, and tried hard to be honest and loving with you. We never took you for granted even though at times you may have thought so. I hear rumors that you thought you had to go to college! Nonsense! We didn't push Lee Ann into something she could not handle. We are guilty of not discouraging you when you chose to go on. We tried to encourage you to carry your interest with you to college and supported you in your choice. Really, I am not looking to praise nor am I beating my breast saying I faulted. It took me a long time to realize I have a lot of self worth and I like the way it feels within me. Hope you are saying "Rah! Mom!"

Having gone through a lot of scripture study in the last 20-30 years, my Faith has been changed. When I was a kid, all we heard from the Church was hell, fire and damnation! I was scared into being good. Since Vatican II, the LOVE of God to his beings shows through to me very vividly and I find warmth and tremendous love for all Christians. Once we were told to believe only Catholics (good ones) went to heaven. I had my doubts about that. Now we have prayer and study groups together and share our Faith in a common bond of Christianity. The people are ahead of the formal Church and are leading the clergy to some new thinking. Birth control, married priests, homosexuality being just the tip of the iceberg. The Church as it is today is a viable, loving, educating, and exciting membership. Some parishes are more in tune than others but the old priest are dying off and new thinking has to enter into the picture for the Church to survive. I have no

doubt that it will. What I am trying to say is that I have a much more liberal attitude about rights of individuals and respect each and every one of us to make decisions suitable to our needs and consciences. Most young Catholic couples are using birth control; I know it and do not judge them. The divorced are being studied with a lot more compassion and are being welcomed back into the sacraments. I wish you children had been exposed to the Church of today; you may have changed your thinking about leaving its membership. I need my Church to sustain me; it does a good job. It supplied me with needed strength even in its "less enlightened years" and is a source of hope in my declining years. In light of today's teachings, I might have considered birth control as a way out for me but then, which of you wished you would not have been born? Since none of you has suffered sufficiently in hunger or want, God must have done well by me in giving each and everyone of you to me. The world gains by having you contribute. My reasoning makes me believe that I have absolutely nothing to apologize for in having all of you and a heck of a lot to be proud of. I congratulate us all. Glad we are on the planet together. Amen!

When I started this letter, I had no idea that I would go off on this tangent! My rational mind got me to thinking and remembering tough looks and hard feelings from neighbors in Scotia with each new pregnancy. They hinted strongly that I should be ashamed to bring so many children into the world to burden them with taxes etc. If all offspring were contributors as you children are, this would be a much better world. Again I say pride is what I feel and not remorse!

All this does not indicate that I may have chosen an easier path for myself. I remember telling you that I had plans to go to Hawaii after graduation and have an entirely different kind of life. After 17 years in Florida, I'm not convinced that Hawaii would have been a paradise on earth. "Like a shepherd He guides his flock; holding them close in his arms, leading them home!" Those words from one of my favorite hymns is apropos to my wants and needs through out my life.

Those first 10 years in NY were very busy. Looking back at them, they were also very productive and I had good health, ambition, and desire to do right by my family. We had some wonderful experiences together. Dzia-dzia and his summer visits, fun in the playgrounds and canals, picnics, looking for bunnies and lots you remember that I don't, I have been glancing at a red book you kids put together for Fathers' day one year that had some beautiful reminders in it. Mary titled it "I Remember Dad". You remembered "3 kids in a bath tub", "being carried to bed "dumb horse' way" "cheezy-weezy stories", "daddy reading upside down and backwards", "the sprinkler hose", "shining shoes before getting allowance" "home made Halloween costumes" "hiding in the closet and yelling surprise!", "time for rosary!" and lots more. I remember a happy and productive family those first years. Sure there were 6 of you down with chicken pox at the same time and colds and middle ear infections came often but the happy memories are the ones I retain best.

With that happy note, I'll let you go. More another time. Dad picked up my autobio and started reading it today. I invited him to a long time ago. He says he's "impressed". I have read parts of his, too. He writes well and certainly with accuracy. I'm also "impressed" with what he sends you. You certainly should know your parents when all is said and done! We are sharing with you and opening up like never before. Thanks for inviting us to get it down on paper. We learn that way!

Love you much,

Mom

*Miss you & Rozie Has sweet to have a little
one around to enjoy!*