

Reunions and remembrances

I recently learned that I am going to be a grandmother for the first time. When my youngest daughter and her husband told me they were expecting it was inevitable that I would recall my own pregnancies.

My mother died when I was about four months pregnant with my first child. As I thought about my daughter having a baby, I remembered how I felt those many years ago. I remembered the tug in my heart when I saw other moms visiting their daughters in the hospital. My daughter's pregnancy triggered some old, yet familiar, emotions. As we know, this is the nature of grief.

We never really "get over" losing someone we love. As time goes on we might visit the grief less often but if something happens to remind us, the emotions can be very powerful.

All this was on my mind when I attended a recent reunion of my mother's family. Six of her brothers and other family members were in attendance. I drove up with my uncle and his family and as I talked to a cousin I hadn't seen in years she said,

"I remember your mom. Aunt Ethel was one of my favourite aunts. She always had candy in her purse."

The realization came to my heart that I was going to spend the next few hours in the company of people who remembered my mother. I am not sure why I hadn't thought of this sooner. I had focused on the connection with my aunts and uncles and my relationship to them as a niece. But for the rest of the drive I began to anticipate the simple comfort that would come to my heart to be in the presence of people who had known and loved my mother.

It was a good day. And as I heard people say how much I was like her, I realized that they were moved by my presence as well. I was the daughter of their big sister and they rejoiced with me when I told them my family news. I felt embraced by them all and it comforted me in the recent grief I had been experiencing.

As I shared with my daughter afterwards, I said to her that it was a very spiritual day for me. She understood.

I believe that spirituality is the art of making connections that help us find peace, hope, love and meaning. My time at the reunion proved that. I felt closer to my mother than I had in years. Nothing had changed in my life. I had simply been with people who loved her.

Obviously, the deepest spiritual connection that I make is with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that I live and in Christ I find meaning. The affirmation that has come to my heart over the past few days is that it is a good thing to be with others who live for Christ. When we spend time with those who KNOW Christ we find a connection WITH Christ. When we share with them our sorrows we can receive comfort. When we share our joy it is increased.

The human spirit requires connection and, if we are honest, we must admit that we often need help to connect with God. This is why it is important to have people in our lives who love God. In sharing with them we gain strength and, in return, we encourage them.

When I am alone with God my spirit is fed. But when I am with my brothers and sisters in Christ I am uplifted in a different way. May each of us find ways to intentionally connect with others who love the Lord.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

2. It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

3. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.

For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

? Psalm 133 1-3 (NRSV)

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