

May 8, 2016

# Happy Mother's Day!

The mom was carrying a baby while leading a small boy by hand to the giraffe enclosure at the Denver Zoo.

The noble creature lumbered toward the three, his head easily reaching over the top of the wire fence as if to say hello.

The little boy stood in awe of the majestic animal towering above him. His mom smiled. What a wonderful moment, *one to be remembered*.

Then the giraffe reared back and sneezed, showering the boy in giraffe snot. (Fortunately, I was a safe distance away!)

I'm not sure how a mom can make a moment like this right:

"But son, mucus is our friend!" or:

"Wow! That has to be some sort of phlegm record!" or maybe:

"Just imagine if he had allergies! You'd look like a jello salad!"

I have to give the mom credit. If I had been the boy's mom, I would have had to struggle really hard to keep from laughing. Keeping my distance from my booger-covered son, I would have led him to the elephant enclosure where I'd pay the keeper to have "Jumbo" give him a quick shower.

I guess that's why God never made me a mom. Well, that and I'm a guy.

Fortunately, God gave me an awesome mom. If I had been that little boy at the zoo, Mom wouldn't have laughed at me. She would have waited until she got home (where, that night as I lay sleeping, she and Dad would have laughed until tears ran down their faces).

When I was a child, I knew Mom was compassionate. I could see that when she volunteered at Birthright, later at the Ecumenical Refugee Center, and later still, when she allowed several refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea to live in our home.

And I knew she was strong-willed: Back in 1971, following a doctor's appointment, they tried to charge Mom some \$120 for the 90 seconds it took the doctor to tell me I had a cold.

I've blanked out much of the incident that followed. What I *do* remember is seeing steam actually coming from my mom's ears--a real medical condition that sometimes occurs at the height of anger. (You will witness much of this after the next election.)

I also recall seeing a blur, which I later realized was my mom leaping over the counter. Then I saw a small poodle flying through the air that turned out to be the receptionist's wig.

The police were called. Mom was arrested but later freed after her attorney cited *Stewart v. Benegin*, a 1918 case in which the defendant, one Mr. Jacoby Stewart, was found not guilty after flicking his pharmacist on the nose for overcharging for a mustard plaster.

As children, we don't always appreciate our parents' gifts, such as Mom's tremendous sense of humor. I guess that when we enter adulthood, we begin to see how our attitude is often a mechanism for survival. A good sense of humor plants flowers in the desert, it slips a bit of Heaven into the hell we all go through from time to time. When we realize that, we appreciate it all the more readily.

There's a joy that comes with being adult friends with your parents. If today, Mom and I were at the zoo, and I was showered with a gallon of giraffe mucus, Mom would have no qualms about enjoying an uncontrollable fit of laughter, right there and then, and then later again with Dad. She would know that she taught me long ago that I was going to have days like this, and I'd have better learned not to take life too seriously.

In fact, I recall now that as a very young child, she told me rather prophetically, "It's much better to laugh at the mucus than to curse the giraffe."

A few years ago, Mom and Dad met with one of the greatest challenges of their lives when they moved into a senior assisted living center. There, they have contended with a vast herd of sneezing giraffes. (That's not to say they moved into a zoo. The food is much better at a zoo.)

There's the flying mucus of leaving your home of 45 years; of letting go of 80 percent of your possessions; of being told when to eat; of losing the freedom to drive to the store; of no longer having the ability to sit in your own back yard.

And how have they handled all of this? It was rough. Well, at first anyway. (A monumental move such as this requires a monumental settling-in period!)

Today, they've learned above all to *laugh at the mucus*. By allowing that bit of Heaven into the difficult situations, they've given Christ a comfy chair in their living room. Our awesome, all-loving Father has not only given them a renewed sense of joy, but has led them to want to bring that same joy to others.

We've always been a family of introverts, yet my mom has taken to befriending other residents when they need it the most, offering her council, a shoulder, a momentary chit-chat. I realize that this is a mission that Christ has called them both to, even now.

Thanks for setting a wonderful example, Mom. Happy Mother's Day!