

Kathy Hillman: Mothers and the 'great cloud of witnesses'

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As a child, I noticed most women wore Mother's Day corsages. Some popped in vivid red. Others contrasted in stark white. Later, I asked what the flowers meant. Mother explained red carnations signified the person's mother was alive. White indicated she had died.



Kathy Hillman "Then why don't you wear one?" I inquired. She responded practically, "Because my choir robe crushes corsages." But the next Mother's Day, she wore red carnations, and so did I.

This year, my corsage should be white. Early last Mother's Day, I held Mother's hand in our home as she slipped into her forever home. I picture her along with my grandmothers and great grandmothers in that great cloud of witnesses described in Hebrews 12:1. The seven diverse women modeled faith and faithfulness, singing "Jesus Loves Me" into the lives of their children.

My great grandmothers endured many hardships. Kate Robinson attended Baylor in Independence, married a doctor and settled in Eldorado. When he died of appendicitis, she opened a general store to support their children.

Robert Allen Barton lived nearly 100 years as "Allie," since her father wanted a boy. Widowed with seven children and one on the way, the tiny woman mothered them into successful lives.



Kathy Hillman with her mother on her wedding day. She wore her mother's wedding dress. Mattie Richmond died young but instilled in her children hard work and selfless love. A train deposited gritty Mary Eliza Mitchell on a West Texas ranch. There with baby Thelma strapped on her back, she was lowered into a canyon to draw spring water, but Sundays found her faithfully tending the nursery.

Grandmother Corinne Richmond Robinson spent 48 years in elementary classrooms, even while attending Howard Payne College. She dreamed of

the world and helped me travel to the Baptist Youth Conference in Switzerland. Grandmother Thelma Mitchell Barton taught me cooking, constantly furnished church refreshments, and always fed visiting preachers at her table. My mother, Mary Barton Robinson, demonstrated meticulous Bible study, thorough teaching preparation, service and dedication to missions. She drove me to my first associational meetings and Baptist conventions.

My initial Mother's Day as a mom, I felt the support of that cloud of witnesses when reality hit. Rushing Marshall's eating was never a good idea. Mother's Day was no exception. What went down came up, and both of us had to change. This Mother's Day will be bittersweet, as we remember a mother passed and celebrate a first-timer. Our daughter, Holly, glows as the adoptive mom of four born of her heart last November.



In an Easter photo, Kathy Hillman's daughter Holly and her husband Kevin Smith pose with their four adopted children (front row) Tally and Mitchell and (back row) Gilbert and Gabe. For many, Mother's Day brings joy and celebration. Others face the pain of losing a mother or child or of wanting a daughter or son. For some, the day offers bitter memories and the challenge of forgiveness. As in life, the Bible offers positive and negative examples of mothers. Rachel, Jochebed and Naomi contrast with Jezebel, Athaliah and Herodias. Scripture relates stories of mothers like Bathsheba and Mary, who experienced great joy and endured heartbreak loss.

This spring, I prayed at the commissioning of the Texas Woman's

Missionary Union officers. I've adapted that petition to mothers.

Heavenly Father,

Guide her steps. Guard her heart. Govern her actions.

Grant her ...



Kathy Hillman on

Mother's Day 2013 with children, Marshall, Holly, and Michael. • The patience of Rachel,

- *The wisdom of Deborah,*
- *The courage of Esther,*
- *The commitment of Ruth,*
- *The persistence of Hannah,*
- *The risk-taking of Rahab,*
- *The compassion of the Shunammite woman,*
- *The faithfulness of Anna,*

- *The competence of Martha,*
- *The spiritual hunger of Mary,*
- *The love of Mary Magdalene,*
- *The service of Dorcas,*
- *The obedience of Lydia,*
- *The generosity of Phoebe and*
- *The influence of Lois and Eunice.*

Grow her in your grace so that her children and the children of others will see your face in hers. Amen

A recent Sunday school lesson focused on the Prodigal Son. Our mostly attentive 2-year-olds gathered for story time. I talked about how sad the family felt when one brother left and how much his father missed him. At the part when the daddy runs to greet the returned son, Cara and Taylor asked simultaneously: “Where was his mommy? Didn’t his mommy miss him, too?”

I assured them that, of course, she did. Then I asked, “Where do you think his mommy was?” Taylor thought a minute and said, “She was in the kitchen.” “Making him cookies,” Cara finished. Taylor, Cara and the others in our class clearly love their mothers, and their mothers dearly love them.

I clearly loved my mother, and my mother dearly loved me. This year, I will give a gift to the Texas Baptist Mother’s Day Hunger Offering in her memory. Please join me in honoring your mother or one who has been like a mother because “Every mother deserves a day, and every child deserves



a meal."

To give, [click here](#).

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