

10 May 2007

Mommie Dearest



Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of May in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

According to Wikipedia, it is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland, and on the ninth of December in Spain. While I have no idea what the custom is in the UK and in Ireland, I certainly do not recall Mother's Day being celebrated on the ninth of December in Spain. In fact, I don't think the Spaniards celebrate it at all.

And I agree with them. Holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day, or Valentine's Day are, in my opinion, randomly appointed dates when you're supposed to send greeting cards and give little presents like chocolate, flowers, or books to those dear to you. You tell your mom, your dad, or your significant other how much you love them, and then wait 365 days for the ritual to take place again.

I dislike holidays like these. In fact, I dislike all holidays and only appreciate the fact that some of them give you a day or two off. To me, the only important days of the year are my birthday and my relatives'.

Now, before the Ghost of Mother's Day Yet to Come appears unto me to give me a scolding and a spanking, let me quickly say that I think that birthdays, indeed, are the best day of the year for acknowledging and giving thanks to your mother. After all, it was she who lay on a hospital bed huffing and puffing, crying and swearing, waiting for it to end as soon as possible. When we finally came out of her womb, as ugly as a bleeding Gollum or Yoda, she forgot all the pain we caused and began to love us in a most visceral way.

Or did she? I remember an episode of *Friends* where the roommates were sitting on the couch watching an uncensored video of a woman giving birth. Of course, the audience of *Friends* couldn't see what exactly was going on in the video, but the wide eyes and gaping mouths of Jennifer Aniston and company, and the hysterical shouting coming from the video, let you know that that mom wasn't exactly having a ball. Then, Monica/Courtney Cox woefully exclaimed, "No wonder my mom hates me!"

It's true. Moms and daughters and dads and sons always have their differences, some of them irreconcilable. Countless are the examples of conservative parents and liberal kids, or of liberal parents and conservative kids. Parents and children can envy each other, lie to each other, criticize each other, disrespect each other, manipulate each other, ignore each other, or be violent towards each other.

Sometimes, family members even kill each other. Emperor Nero is said to have murdered his mother Agrippina for conspiring against him. Emperor Commodus, fictionalized in the brilliant film *Gladiator*, had his sister Lucilla put to death as, like Agrippina, she was involved in a conspiracy. Atahualpa, the last Incan ruler, drowned his half-brother because of inheritance disputes. Mary Lamb, the co-author of the delightful *Tales from Shakespeare*, was mentally ill and stabbed her mother to death. The Nazis Josef and Magda Goebbels poisoned their six children before poisoning themselves. And the great soul and R&B singer Marvin Gaye was shot by his father in Los Angeles in 1984. *What's going on?*

Thankfully, most of us aren't such bad people. Yet don't we sometimes take our siblings, our children, our father, and our mothers for granted? As the 19th-century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli wrote:

To a mother, a child is everything; but to a child, a parent is only a link in the chain of her existence.

Things shouldn't be this way. Happy Mother's Day to all mothers in the world!