

A love that outshines grief

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Published in the *Christian Science Sentinel*. December 27, 2004, pp 10,11

The wave of loneliness and grief that swept over me took me by surprise. Christmas Day had always been such a happy time for me, spent with close family. This was the first one without my mother. Her passing several weeks earlier had been a shock – totally unexpected. She had lived with my husband, David, and me for the past 15 years. We'd been so close; we even called ourselves the Three Musketeers. You know – “one for all and all for one.”

Like many mothers, she had been the individual in our family who kept the children in close contact with one another. Without her, my two siblings and their families suddenly disappeared from my life. There was no more carol singing with Mum playing the organ. No vying with each other as to who would take the alto and tenor parts. This time there was just my husband and me for Christmas dinner. The day was quiet, long and empty, filled with past memories. I missed my mother desperately.

I cried often that day, and the following few. The next Festive Season wasn't much better. How do you fill the aching void when someone you've loved and lived with has gone? Sure, I kept busy. And there were people around me – my dear husband, for example. But I felt alone and empty in the night, and in the moments when I still couldn't quite believe that she'd passed on.

Looking for comfort and healing in the wee small hours one morning, I remembered snatches of something Mary Baker Eddy had written about losing friends. When the warm morning sunlight dawned, I opened my copy of her book *Science and Health*, and found the passage I was looking for: “Would existence without personal friends be to you a blank? Then the time will come when you will be solitary, left without sympathy, but this seeming vacuum is already filled with divine Love” (p. 266).

Life without my mother did seem pretty hollow. It reminded me of the lyrics to a song I'd sung as a professional singer, “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child ... a long way from home.” Pulling out a notebook, I started to write down my thoughts. I asked myself what the hollow place in my heart was all about. Was it the lack of my mother's daily company? Was I missing her wisdom, love, caring, spiritual mindedness, compassion, and generosity? Yes. To me, they were gone from my life, because she was.

Then I asked myself if this was really true from a spiritual standpoint. Gently, a different answer came.

No. You're not bereft of that mother-love. Your life hasn't got a hole in it. It's full of God's tender love. Right now this divine Love is your Mother-Father – mothering you as much as fathering you. You can never lack a mother's companionship, with God as your Parent. God's wise counsel and care are always with you.

I knew that my dear mother had lived her life close to God. She'd had so many examples of His protection and guidance. Knowing this comforted and reassured me. It made me realize that I couldn't be separated from the source of her life – God. Caring and companionship sprang from divine Love, and their expression in my life wasn't limited to one person. I could expect to feel God's Mother-love in infinite ways. I continued to pray with these thoughts.

As the sun rose in the sky that morning, so did my spirits. Instead of thinking of myself as a person lonely for her mother, a "motherless child," I began to understand that Love had always been my real Mother. And each time the sadness and feelings of missing my mother tried to creep back, I shut those thoughts out and replaced them with gratitude for God's love and care of both of us, then and always. This took constant practice, that year and the next.

Now two years on, the loneliness has gone. I can say that I feel the constant mothering of God. I've learned that the bond of true companionship, friendship, and love we feel for someone can never be severed, even when that person is no longer with us. She or he is near to our hearts on special occasions – and all year through.