

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

May and June bring a number of holidays and occasions that can be difficult for bereaved parents to face. In May we celebrate Mother's Day and Memorial Day; and in June we celebrate Father's Day. Parenthood changes our lives forever. Along with the joy and celebrating a new life and new member of our family comes the knowledge of the tremendous responsibility you have to protect and keep this little person safe. The world seems a little scarier somehow. Accidents, disease, even bullies on the playground seem more threatening. So we take a deep breath, say a little prayer, give them a hug and send them off into that scary world each day.



As your child grows into a teen and then an adult, the worries only change. Now you worry about them being in an accident, peer pressure to make bad choices, where to get the money to send them to college, and will they find a career that gives them fulfilling, important work that also allows them to be able to financially support themselves and a family.

We have been empty nesters now for several years, and really believe "it is for the birds!" It is bittersweet to think that part of our lives as parents of younger children is over. We rejoice in each new chapter of our adult sons' lives, their excitement and optimism for the future but greatly miss the daily routine of all the school activities and sports. We are so proud of the fine young men our boys are, but I miss the precious little ones they were. It is hard to realize they don't "need" us as much for their day to day decisions, and want to "stretch their wings"-to make their own decisions and possibly mistakes.

I have been known to tell my children "I don't care if you are 55 years old-you will still be my baby, and I am going to wonder where you are and who you are with!" They usually roll their eyes and sigh, but I tell them I'm not going to change. They may as well get used to it. It's true-parenthood doesn't end when they have their 18th birthday or are handed their diploma. It is very difficult to step back from making all the decisions for their daily living and activities and trust them to make sure they are eating nutritious regular meals, getting enough sleep and taking good care of themselves and paying their bills. I have to trust them to make their own decisions and yes, mistakes sometimes, but we learn from our mistakes. Try as we might, we can't keep them wrapped in plastic and away from the world. They certainly don't want it, and we don't want that for our kids. Again, we hold our breath (and any unwanted advice), say a prayer and let them know we believe in them and "have their back".

When our son Aaron went to Heaven, because he was so young (5) I cried so much and wondered if he was in pain when he died, and if he was scared there in Heaven without us. His dad or I had always stayed at the hospital with him when he was there and it was unbearable to think he could be there all alone. I suffered for many months worrying about this until one night I dreamed he was playing in a grassy field. He was smiling and laughing and able to run and play. He had been so sick the last year of his life and really didn't have the energy to run with the other kids. This dream brought me so much comfort, because for the first time I felt he was no longer sick. He was happy and able to run and play. It also brought us so much comfort to remember my grandmother, who adored Aaron, and my husband's mother were there in Heaven to welcome him, hug him and spoil him. The grandmas will be there for him until we can join him some day.

This month and next as we honor mothers and fathers remember the joy your children brought you-each child's uniqueness and special gifts. Remember to give thanks for YOUR mother and father. They love and care about us, worry about us (STILL!) and helped model and shape us into the parents we are. They also think their grandchildren are the most special, smartest, and most gifted children ever. It is a precious gift to know someone loves your children even more than you do.

May your love for your children and your joy they bring to your life bring you comfort and healing in this time of honoring those we love here on Earth and those gone on before us.

In friendship,

Nadine