

Two Special Mothers

By Bishop Victor Galeone

Some time ago, I received a letter from my brother Frank that was quite moving. The letter was written to Kenny, the eldest son of his best friend Ken. As we prepare to celebrate Mother's Day, how fitting it is to hear from this heroic mother. - Bishop Galeone

Dear Kenny,

My name is Joanne, and I'm your birth mother! When Tina called me from Catholic Charities to say she had a letter from you to send me, I was stunned (momentarily) because it was so unexpected, but absolutely thrilled once it had a chance (about three seconds) to sink in. And then began the longest week of my life. Mail seems to be a little slow getting here, so it didn't arrive until Friday, and I thought my heart was going to stop when I saw the envelope. After waiting all these years...I was about to see the face I've wanted to see for so long. And when I saw those wonderful pictures, my first thought was, "He's so handsome!"

Thank you, Kenny, for having the courage to do this. I think it took a lot of courage because you had no way to know how I would respond. But it means more to me than you could possibly know. I have always loved you - even long before you were born! - more than you can even imagine. But I also knew that, in deciding to give you up for adoption, I might never see you again. It was - and wasn't - a difficult decision. On the one hand, it was so painful, it was like having my heart ripped out; but on the other hand, I knew it was absolutely the best thing for you. It was the only way you would have the great family and normal, happy life that I wanted so much for you...And your letter and photos have confirmed that for me, and made it worth all those years of anonymity...Thank you so much! You've turned the big question mark I've always lived with into an exclamation point!

And what a beautiful family you grew up in. Of course, I had no input at the time, but if I had been able to pick the ideal family, I couldn't have done any better. I am so grateful to your parents for all they've done, as they were the key to a happy life for you, which is all I ever wanted...

I always wanted to look for you, but didn't for two reasons. The first is that I had agreed not to interfere in your life and I felt that was important for you and your adoptive parents, so that your life could proceed as normally as possible. And the last thing I wanted to do was introduce any kind of disruption or emotional chaos into your life or theirs...

Yes, I was young and still in high school but did graduate and went on to two years of college...I've never married, so there are no other brothers and sisters to tell you about. But within my family, I have a younger brother and two older sisters—just like you. [Two of Kenny's siblings were also adopted.]

I love the pictures of you and Kelly and Katie! [Kenny's children] What a beautiful family. I'm really happy to know that I'm a grandmother and, no, it doesn't make me feel old anyway (only 47!), so I guess it will take more than being a grandmother to accomplish that.

I can't tell from the pictures how tall you are. I'm 5'8", and your father (whose name is Ron) was about 6'3"...In fact, even though you look a lot like me, it's amazing how much you look like your father in the picture of you dressed in that great tux for your senior prom. I can't thank you enough for letting me see these pictures. If it were possible to wear pictures out by looking at them, I certainly would have done it by now!

One thing I want you to know: you're not disrupting my life - you're completing it. You're filling that deep void that has been there for so long. You're giving a name and a face and a confirmation of

growth and life to my memory of you as that tiny infant that I sent off on a great life adventure, asking God to take care of you and give you everything you needed, because I couldn't...

I look forward to hearing from you again soon...I think a meeting is destined to be. Yes, we can and probably should take it slow... but not too slow!

With lots of love, from your birth mom,

Joanne