

A Mid-day Meditation

From

Sue's Perspective

"Grandparents can be very special resources. Just being close to them reassures a child, without words, about change and continuity, about what went before and what will come after." - Fred Rogers

Last week, I was away visiting with my sister for a couple of days. We hadn't seen each other for months and it was a good visit. What I like about going to see my sister is the plethora of "stuff" that she sets aside for me. Usually the "stuff" has some significance to it. This visit was no different. Two of the items with which my sister gifted me were treasures of my grandparents...

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The first thing that I received was a Book of Common Prayer. Now, needless to say, I have more copies of the Book of Common Prayer than any one person should rightly possess. For some reason, people think that perhaps I might like to have a copy of the BCP for my library. However, when I opened the cover of this particular copy of the BCP, inscribed in it I saw, "To Mum, with all best wishes, Christmas 1951...From Betty & Michael, Margaret, Bill, Susan." It was my Nan's well-used BCP that my Mum had given to her for Christmas in 1951. I never saw my Nan looking at it, but the pages are of a very fine, delicate paper that if you wet your finger to turn the page, the corner of the page becomes wrinkled. The pages of the daily office are especially wrinkled. I don't ever recall my Nan going to church. I know that she was a devout Anglican. I know that the parish priest would bring her communion to her home regularly. It wasn't until after Nan died that I learned why she didn't go to church. You see, it hurt her heart too much after my father died to go to church. She never lost faith, she never lost God but she never lost the pain that went with that terrible part of our family history. To have this prayer book with its telltale wrinkled pages gives me peace and comfort knowing that Nan passed on to me, without my knowing, a strength of faith that upheld her then and upholds me now...

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The second thing that I was given is a 3-disc set of Handel's "Messiah." I told my sister that I have a recording of "Messiah" and she said to me, "but Sir Thomas Beecham was Gindy's favourite!" Gindy is the name that we called our grandfather. My grandfather oozed music. That is the only way to describe him. Before my mother's family immigrated to Canada, my grandfather was very involved with musical theatre in general, with staging Gilbert & Sullivan operettas in particular. He conducted the productions, as legend has it, using his pipe as a baton. By the time I came to know him, Gindy had given up his conducting and his playing (he was an accomplished pianist by all accounts) but did a lot of listening. As children most of us knew something of the silly songs of Gilbert & Sullivan learned from our Gindy. My grandfather was a man of faith as well. Although he did not talk about it (one didn't talk about such things in those days), I just knew that he regarded his musical talent as a gift from God not to be hidden away but to be shared. Nan and Gindy made sure that we had records when we were children so that we could learn to appreciate all sorts of music...

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Spending time with my grandparents was always a special thing to me. I loved climbing onto Gindy's knee and hearing the stories he had to tell. I loved sitting beside Nan and smelling the fragrance of her perfume, listening to tales about my mother when she was a young girl. Being close to them not only in person but in "heart" gave me a comfort that is very hard to describe. I knew that I was loved by my Mum but the love that I felt from my grandparents was different somehow...

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