



A little over seven months ago, Hollywood lost one of its beloved actors from television history. She was a favorite of my grandfather, one he would make a point of watching, with a drink at hand: as if calm and serenity could always manage to settle in as he watched this beloved detective figure out yet another mystery in an hour's time. Angela Lansbury became a treasure for many Americans and beyond for *Murder, She Wrote*. But behind the illustrious fame and fortune, was a story far more tragic and awe-inspiring than anything she won an Emmy for on television. decades, as twelve seasons were produced of

Lansbury was first and foremost a mother. And during the 1960s, when the children were teenagers, unfortunately, they joined in with the younger crowds around Los Angeles experiencing with drugs, all the way up to heroin. After finding out their addiction that they did their best to hide from their parents, Lansbury insisted on pausing her acting career entirely, to move her family to an old farmhouse in Ireland, near where her own mother had grown up. Years later, her children would say that that move away from the struggles and temptations galore, in fact, saved their lives. Lansbury didn't know how many complications would ensue for the rest of her career, or how long she would stay to care for her son and daughter. But it didn't seem to matter to her. She would stay with them and her husband as long as it took to ensure her children could somehow be made whole again.

So, as we celebrate this Mother's Day, we also recognize the complications for families that are sometimes hidden, sometimes well known. And we know not all mothers have the ability to pick up and move their children across oceans and continents to avoid harm and danger. Some mothers have to stick it out wherever they are in their life. Some mothers pause hopes and dreams and careers to care for their cherished ones at home. Some struggle immensely, including today. We know there are complications for many mothers and children at various stages, to say the least.

And so, we as a church are called to be the safe haven for all the numerous emotions and feelings brought into sanctuaries and dining room tables and outdoor picnics and everywhere else in between for this holiday. Some will be filled with uncontrollable joy and relentless laughter. Others, won't be as much. Regardless, the Gospel remains the same. For the mothers who feel so proud, for those who aren't so sure they've done enough, for the children who adore their moms, for the ones who struggle to do so, this God thoroughly cherishes all of them just the same, no matter what.

For this is the God who saw humanity struggle, addicted to power and hatred and wanting more and more and more of anything possible, and insisted on taking us to a place of hope and beauty and grace in Jesus Christ. This is the God who saw far too many complications that we brought on ourselves, and still insisted on saving us with an uncontrollable and relentless love. Granted, we still deal with those struggles of power and hate, and time and time again, God will insist on taking us to a place of hope and beauty and grace in Jesus Christ.

And sometimes, that happens most wonderfully in the mothers of this world, some of whom are our very own; other times, not. But for the children of Angela Lansbury, the woman that millions of people better knew as Detective Jessica Fletcher on television; her children knew her as the mother who brought the verse from Acts to life: "In [Christ], we live and move and have our being." In Jesus, we live to bring God's love to life. In our Risen Lord, we move to show compassion to those who wonder if they are not only worthy of a mother's care, but of God as well. Angela Lansbury insisted that no matter how far down a most dangerous path her son and daughter had traversed, she was going to respond with grace and new life.

And so it is with God for all times and places. Yes, as much as this will be a joyous day filled with laughter for some family gatherings, there will be a fair share of complications for others for whatever the reasons may be. Through it all, God is the safe-haven for all the emotions and feelings, all the complicated stories, all the joy and laughter. As if nothing can happen in this life to separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. For it is "In him [that] we live and move and have our being." It is in him, that we experience an uncontrollable and relentless grace, and we don't have to be taken across continents and oceans to know that Gospel. It has already been brought to us right here, right now, including through so many mothers who paused hopes and dreams to bring that Gospel to their own children and beyond. So, for those mothers and the mother-figures in our life, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!