



## The Influence of their Mothers on Presidents Kennedy and Biden

John F. Kennedy and Joseph Biden are the only two Presidents that are Roman Catholic. Their Irish American Catholic mothers had a strong influence on their lives. Mothers serve as the primary teachers of faith and moral responsibility. Rose Kennedy instilled in her children which has been passed on to their children the words from the Bible Luke 12:48 "To whom much is given, much will be required." At his mother's funeral, President Biden quoted his mother Catherine "Every man's your equal and every man deserves respect." Both of these Presidents followed the teachings of their mothers throughout their public careers.

The Irish American Catholic experience has been shaped by faith and family. President Kennedy and Biden were faced with hardships in their lives but devotion of their families helped them during those difficult times.

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy was born into a prominent Boston Catholic family. She was formed by faith, education and civic engagement being the daughter of Honey Fitz the Mayor of Boston. Rose attended daily Mass which had an impact on her family life and dealing with the many hardships she experienced. As a mother, she emphasized moral responsibility, self-control, and perseverance believing that suffering, when met with dignity and faith, could strengthen character. She instilled in her children that success carried an obligation to serve the common good. What an honor to see her son be Inaugurated as President with his hand on the family Bible. John F. Kennedy's calm composure, intellectual rigor, and commitment to public service reflected these values. He embodied the Catholic ideal of quiet endurance when dealing with national crisis when strong leadership and moral clarity were needed.

Catherine Eugenia "Jean" Finnegan Biden was a devoted mother who was protective of her children especially with her son struggled with a childhood stutter. She instilled confidence in him teaching "that failure was inevitable but giving up was unforgiveable." When President Biden was faced with the tragedy of losing his wife and daughter, his mother demonstrated that

faith provided the strength need in this darkest period showing her son that grief and hope could coexist.

Catherine Biden had the privilege to see her son be elected as Vice President but not President. At her funeral, Vice President Biden stated “In our view, mom was the sole spirit and essence of what it means to be an Irish American mother, devoted to her Roman Catholic faith, proud of her Irish heritage, protective of her family, committed to her husband and always loyal to her friends” Empathy, courage, and faith were her guiding principles. President Biden credited his mother with teaching him how to endure suffering while also recognizing the pain of others. Her influence is reflected in his emphasis on empathy, healing, and unity as demonstrated in his leadership style.

A shared Irish American Catholic Legacy was demonstrated by Presidents Kennedy and Biden serving as Presidents with their resilience in adversity, commitment to justice and human dignity committed to justice and human dignity

Together Rose Kennedy and Catherine Biden are two remarkable mothers that were the most influential teachers of faith. Through their lived witness, Irish American Catholic mothers have shaped not only families and communities, but also national leaders whose values guided the United States at pivotal moments in history.