



## **Celebrating 250 Years of America** ***Honoring Irish American Mothers and Their Enduring Patriotism***

On this Mother's Day, we pause to honor the extraordinary women who have shaped our families, our faith, and our nation. From the earliest days, Irish American Mothers have played special roles in developing many of our country's leaders. Let us honor some of those women as we celebrate Mother's Day as their influence formed the characters of our leaders.

Twenty-three of our Presidents claimed Irish Heritage. Before there was a President, he was a son with a relationship with his mother. Characteristics of a leader are formed in the home under the influence of their parents especially the sacrifice, strengthened by faith, and guided by the steady voice of a mother. Let us remember today 3 of these women; Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy and Catherine "Jean" Finnegan Biden.

Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson was born in Ireland. She emigrated with her husband and her 2 young sons. The Jacksons shared the experience of other early Irish immigrants which was marked by hardship, displacement, and resilience. Her husband Andrew died shortly before the birth of his namesake the future President Andrew Jackson. Elizabeth raised her sons alone on the South Carolina frontier during a period of unrest. During the American Revolutionary, she strongly supported the Patriot cause and encouraged her sons to resist British authority. One of her sons was killed during the war and her other sons were in prison. Elizabeth had an active role in the release of her sons from prison. Unfortunately, her one son died of the impacts of prison life leaving Andrew as her sole surviving son. After her sons release from prison, she continued to nurse wounded soldiers where she contracted the illness that led to her death. Andrew Jackson was only fourteen years old when he lost his mother leaving him as the sole member of his immediate family. This profound loss had an effect on Jackson reinforcing the lessons his mother had taught him: perseverance, personal honor, and loyalty to one's principles. Throughout his life, Jackson credited his mother as his greatest influence, often stating that everything he valued courage, independence, and sense of justice came from her example.

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy represented the growth of the Irish American experience in the United States. 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. Rose Kennedy instilled in her children which has been passed on to their children the words from Luke 12:48 "To whom much is given, much will be required." What an honor to see her son be Inaugurated as President with his hand on the Fitzgerald family Bible. John F. Kennedy's calm composure, intellectual rigor, and commitment to public service reflected these values. He embodied the 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 when her son struggled with a childhood stutter. She instilled confidence in him teaching "that failure was inevitable but giving up was unforgiveable." When Biden was faced with the tragedy of losing his wife and daughter, his mother demonstrated that faith provided the strength needed 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, her son 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. His leadership style is demonstrated by this quote of his mother "Every man's your equal and every man deserves respect."

Across generations, the mothers of all of our leaders shaped the men and women who built a nation. Before they were leaders, their mothers instilled in them; faith, family, and the enduring spirit of Irish America honoring their Irish heritage and the promise of America. Their mothers taught them dignity before it was tested. They taught courage before it was required. They taught faith before it was challenged. These women are some of the unknown heroes of Irish America. Irish American mothers taught their children the meaning of sacrifice and service. They raised sons and daughters who would answer the call in every chapter of American history from the American Revolutionary War to the challenges of today.

The patriotism of Irish American Mothers has always been steadfast. It lives in their devotion to God, family, and community. As members of the LAOH, Irish American mothers have continued to serve supporting charitable works, defending faith and values, and promoting justice and unity. Thank you to all of our mothers and their influence in our lives as the keepers of faith and

heritage ensuring that each generation understands the sacrifices made for freedom, and the responsibility that comes with it. Our mother's influence is lasting and profound.

On this Mother's Day, we honor not only the mothers who are with us, but also those who have gone before us whose love, strength, and faith continue to guide us.

May we always cherish their example.

### **An Irish Mother**

She is foremost among the hidden saints of earth.

A follower of Christ, whose cloister is within the four walls of the home, wherein she reigns as a queen.

A lover of Christ, whose little kingdom comprises the treasured souls that God has given her to guide.

A ruler for Christ, who draws her subject to her by sanctity and love.

Her toil worn hands that clasp the old rosary are eloquent of strength to seize and lift to good all souls they meet.

Her lips are molded to lines of peace by years of unending prayer and murmured benisons over sleeping babes,

upon her bow eternal calm and resignation sit enthroned,

her eyes are lit by the light of serene confidence,

that tells of a heart secure in the friendship of God.

by Fr. W.J. Lockington.

## **Happy Mother's Day.**