

Story of Love – from Angela Y. Butler

“I loved you before I knew you!” Unknown

On this 4th Sunday of Advent, I was asked to talk about Love! I ask you to journey with me through some personal stories of maternal, parental, generational love.

Like is known, many first time, new mothers tend to experience “oh so funny moments”, which for me, came with a twist.

To elaborate, my Mother never allowed me to babysit, reflective of how she was raised. She’d say, AngiePangie, when the time comes, I want you to experience, learn all with “your” baby - the twist!

The first night home from the CA hospital, with our son’s bassinet up against my side of the bed, well, as I was about to fall asleep, I abruptly set up, and in a panicked voice, asked who’s going to watch our baby! My startled, wiped out husband, up on raised elbows, wearily looking over at our son, said he seems fine, he’s even already asleep. I know that, I said, tightly gripping Mario’s bassinet, but, whose going to watch our baby - such a night!

As is Navy life, my husbands submarine left 3 days later, for 3 months, so my folks gift of a first class flight home, was a joyous relief! At O’Hare, my dad quickly hugged me, eased Mario out of my arms, briefly leaned down so my Mom could see and kiss him. Then, with his long legged stride, my dad headed off way ahead of us, loudly declaring to my baby boy that neither his mom, nor his grandma, knew anything about babies. But, don’t worry, grandpa’s got you now!

My Mom, so relieved to see, up close, that unlike her, I’d truly had an easy pregnancy and was good to go, tightly hugged me! Soon, we managed to catchup with my dear dad!

Yes, admittedly, motherhood, initially, was a lot of, “oh my goodness, look at what he’s actually doing, capable of doing!” All much enjoyed by my mom, who’d calmly say, with a smile, yes Angie, of course, he’s a little us. While my dad, shaking his head, chuckled, as if to say, I told you so!

Years later, back living in IN, a single day forever redefined motherhood for me. I’d picked up my then 4 year old from his Valpo preschool, a place he’d totally enjoyed for many months. Mario, unusually subdued, suddenly asked could he go to a preschool that had more kids that looked like him. Quickly, I pulled off the road, for one of our focused two-way talks, and to turnaround. The director said a newly enrolled child had introduced racist language. Holding my boys hand, looking into his precious face, I thought . . . So it begins!

Little did I know - a few blocks from home, a car abruptly pulled up way to close to us. As I turned to look, racial slurs, animated laughter slammed me, along with an attempt to literally run us off the road. After I’d easily out maneuvered them, the two white male teenagers, no longer laughing, quickly sped off.

Soon parked in front of our off campus townhouse, I’d noticed they’d obviously looped back to follow us home. Immediately, I used a method my dad had taught my mom and me. I exited with Mario, on his side of the car, then with him behind me, I walked backwards, sandwiching my boy between me and our front door. At the door, Mario, with my key, quickly unlocked the door and stepped inside. The teenagers left.

Once I’d settled Mario, I called the Valpo police - informative, unnerving, a complete waste of time. Next, I called my Mom, who’d obviously already lived the heart-hurting real that we must come to safely navigate, often to live. Well, the very next week my mom called to say they were homeowners, again. They’d used my dad’s VA Benefits to buy a lovely Glen Park home, comfortably big enough for us all!

Surprised, relieved, saddened, I knew this meant they’d canceled their future retirement plans to relocate to Vegas, that is, once my dad had retired from US Steel. But, as my wise mom said, we all needed generational peace of mind. Mario

then attended a more racially mixed preschool, and I drove distance, round trip, daily, for years, to VU - a comforting no biggie.

Decades later, my son, a husband of 5 years, excitedly placed his precious new born son, Zachary Miguel, in my arms - my Mario, a dad, my daughter-in-law, Beth, a mom, me a grandma, my folks great-grandparents...glorious generational love, several times over!

Blessedly, three years later, our precious Micah Zander joined us - time for the wondrously, crazy-fun world of siblings!

And now, with our Nicholas James and Chloe Elise, the wondrous world of step-grandma love, and mother-in-law love, again, with their mom, our Lisa - blended family love!

I am grateful for all the variations love has taken in my life, along with its challenges and possibilities. Human love sure struggles to make sense of FaceTime, air hugs, social distance, and even fails now and then to weather seasons of hardship, but I know love is getting us through and holding us together. So let us turn now to our Candle of love...