



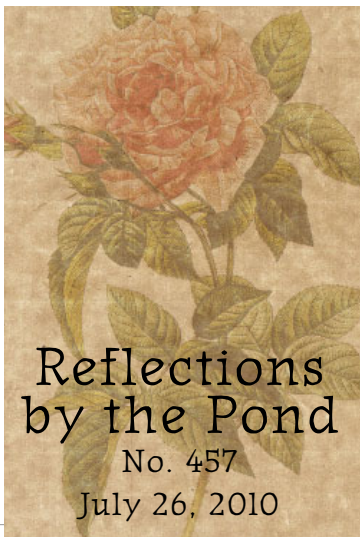
What He Left Behind

IT IS NOW A LITTLE OVER A YEAR since Mom passed away at the age of ninety. On a May evening in 2009 she slipped easily, joyfully from broken flesh into the welcoming arms of her Savior. Hers was a simple, unsophisticated, yet well-spent life, for it was a life spent in service both to her Lord and to others.

Because we were the ones to clean out her house when it came time to sell, and because she lived with us for five years after that, our home is filled with reminders of her. Her room for those five years contains her bedroom furniture

and her clothes still hang in the closet. Her books fill the bookcase, and her mementoes still rest in the “what-not” shelf mounted between the windows. Scattered throughout our home are pieces of this and that from her childhood and youth, honeymoon and wedding pictures with Dad, and objects that were drenched with memories even when I was a child.

There are moments when her presence seems more real now than when she was still physically with us, for there are no longer the encumbrances of responsibility and management, of daily confronting



Reflections
by the Pond

No. 457

July 26, 2010

the face and body misshapen by decades of pain, of the inevitable role-reversal that occurs between parent and child. With these no longer factors, the daily reminders of Mom with which we are surrounded speak not of extreme age and pain, but of the very best of her life and memory. And they are reminders that she is no longer that crumpled pile of flesh, but now a liberated spirit bathed in the unspeakable joy of her Lord.

THE BEST GIFT

"But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

John 16:5-7

The final twenty-four hours of Jesus before His death were assuredly painful to behold. Those who loved Him must have been appalled by what the progression of beatings had done to the Lord, reducing Him to a welted, misshapen mass of bloody flesh. And in His final moments He became such a monstrosity of sin and corruption that even His own Father had to turn away in disgust.

When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole

land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Mark 15:33-34

Then Jesus died, and a month and a half later He returned to His Father, leaving in the wake of that miraculous ascension a group of followers bereft of their master, their friend, their Lord. Now, they believed, they would have just their memories of Him to ease the pain of His absence.

But almost two months later the promised Holy Spirit arrived.

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Acts 2:2-4

Now, through the supernatural power of that blessed Comforter, the disciples would no longer depend on their fading recollections of Jesus, but could know Him in ways never before imagined. And because the Spirit has no agenda of His own—Jesus had told them earlier, "for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever

He hears, He will speak"—they would now possess a connection to Christ Jesus they had not earlier enjoyed.



When the physical Jesus departed this earth He left behind the best gift—after salvation, that is—He could have given His followers. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, every believer possesses a direct link to the truth about Christ. More than that, the "Spirit of truth" comes alongside and speaks to our longing heart the very thoughts and words expressed by the Lord.

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you."

John 16:13-15

It is as if He were still here.

