In the Palm of God's Hand

LATELY I’VE BEEN THINKING A LOT about my mother. She has spent the last four-and-a-half years in a nursing home 300 miles away, living with some kind of dementia. Mom used to be a force to be reckoned with—an energetic woman who worked outside the home during a time when few women did. A woman who, with my dad, raised six daughters and then spent several years at Dad’s side when he was in a nursing home bed, unable to arise, but with his mind and spirit intact.

Now Mom spends her days in a Broda chair. She can’t walk or talk or even eat much anymore. How sad, people say. Does she know who you are? That’s the question, isn’t it? The honest answer is that I don’t really know.

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Every once in a while my sisters and I are surprised by a note of grace: a gleam in Mom's blue eyes, a look of recognition. It’s as if her spirit is swimming to the surface from a long way away. Those are reminders that she is still capable of giving and receiving love.

God’s ways are not our ways, says Isaiah. But God accomplishes what he sets out to do in our lives. As we walk alongside the people in our lives, as we join in their struggles, weaknesses, and joys, we may wonder about how God is working in a particular situation. But we can remind them and ourselves that God’s ways are not our ways. And we can trust that God is good. All the time.

From beginning to end, everything is grace, everything is given.

—RICHARD ROHR

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