

Sunday Worship at Home
14th March 2021



WELCOME on this fourth Sunday in Lent, Mothering Sunday; a day when we have chance to break the solemnity of Lent, and celebrate our Mums and all who have, and do, care for and nurture us

This year, things are, of course, very different – many who would normally share in family gatherings cannot; for many more, this is the first Mother's Day since the death of their Mum. So, as well as celebration, we acknowledge the tinges of sadness

You may wish to have a candle available to light a little later in the service, as we pause to remember

WE PREPARE

God of the past, who has fathered and mothered us,
we thank you.

God of the future, who is always ahead of us,
we trust you.

God of the present, here in the midst of us,
we praise you.

God of life, behind us, beyond us, within us,
we rejoice in your glorious love.

HYMN

Let all the world in every corner sing,
 'My God and King!'
The heavens are not too high;
 His praise may thither fly:
 the earth is not too low;
 His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
 'My God and King!'

Let all the world in every corner sing,
 'My God and King!'
The Church with psalms must shout,
 no door can keep them out:
 but, above all, the heart
 must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
 'My God and King!'

Praise God who loves us,
praise God who cares.

We say, 'Sorry'...

God of the spirit of kindness,
in the glory of the earth and sea and stars,
in the kaleidoscope of colour and shade and shapeliness,
in the patterns of humour and tenderness and touch,
we celebrate your generosity.

Yet, even as we come, we know there are times when our words,
deeds and omissions fall short of your holy standards; we say sorry...

Forgive us when we forget the gift in our every breath,
the care that sustains our every moment,
that grace that can transform our every day.

Lord have mercy,
Lord have mercy.

Set us free from the prison of grudging hearts,
mean desires, resentful spirits.

Christ have mercy,
Christ have mercy.

Give us the courage to act with justice and generosity
and draw us into love that does not calculate or keep scores.

Lord have mercy,
Lord have mercy.

...and receive God's loving forgiveness...

May almighty God
who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,
bring us his pardon and peace, now and forever. **Amen.**

Praise God who loves us
praise God who cares.

We give thanks...

Gracious God,
for your love for us, gentle as a shower,
healing our pain, binding our wounds,
we give you thanks.

For your love for us, sure as the dawn,
transforming our darkness, revealing your truth,
we give you thanks.

For your love for us, mercifully steadfast,
calling us to you, raising us up,
we give you thanks.

For your love for us, encouraging questions,
open to doubts, making us vulnerable,
we give you thanks.

Urge us on, O Christ to find wholeness,
through serving you, by serving others,
in the power of your Spirit. **Amen.**

We continue in prayer with a collect for today...

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us...
Our Father...

We pause and remember...

If you have a candle, you may wish to light it now



pause

Loving Lord, for many, today is a day to give thanks for all who cared and care for us with a mothering love. For many others, today can be hard, bringing back memories of difficult relationships and times.

So, within our celebrations, we pause to remember and we offer to you our memories of sadness and hurts...

Loving Lord, whose light can pierce even the darkest of places and who knows the pains carried in the hearts of so many; hold each in your loving hands of peace we ask, through Jesus your Son. **Amen.**

HYMN

When I look into Your holiness,
when I gaze into Your loveliness,
when all things that surround
become shadows in the light of You.

When I've found the joy of reaching Your heart,
when my will becomes enthroned in Your love,
when all things that surround
become shadows in the light of You.

I worship You; I worship You;
the reason I live is to worship You.
I worship You; I worship You;
the reason I live is to worship You.

New Testament Reading 2 Corinthians 1; 3-7

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

Praise God who loves us
praise God who cares.

Gospel John 19; 25 - 27

²⁵ Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.



Praise God who loves us
praise God who cares.

Reflection

Along with gifts of flowers, chocolates and the like, many pretty cards are posted for Mothering Sunday - pictures of flowers, birds, butterflies, teddys or something equally pastel and gentle.

Whatever the picture, it is unlikely to show Jesus' crucifixion, even though there are many fine-art depictions of the scene. Yet that is exactly where the Church takes us this morning.

To be honest, I tend to shy away from Calvary in a regular 'Mothering Sunday Family Service' and seek more the 'flowers and chocolate, pastel side' of Mothering, with a relaxed [even jolly] talk focussing on love. However, today's different arrangements give us opportunity to visit and be confronted by the sheer pain of Jesus' cross. We focus on three key people, a dying Son; a bewildered Disciple; a Mother whose heart is breaking.

Mary knew about suffering. Mary suffered as a teenager - pregnant outside of marriage, far from home, she gave birth in a small stable. Mary suffered when Herod wanted to kill her baby and they were forced to flee to Egypt to seek safety as refugees. Mary suffered as she watched a whole nation misunderstand and taunt her son. And here, at the foot of the cross, Mary sees her beautiful baby boy crucified for a crime he hasn't committed. It is far from pastel flowers and chocolates.

We can't imagine her pain as her heart is torn apart. Now in her mid-forties, Mary is widowed. Jesus, of course, knows her agony and is aware that, after his death no one will care for her; he's the oldest son and he's concerned. With his whole body wracked with unimaginable pain, he looks from the cross to his mother and the disciple there; he says to Mary, 'Woman, behold your Son.', and to the man, 'Behold your mother.'.

This is a time of deepest pain, and still, it oozes love. We join those at the foot of the cross for just a moment, yet from which ever angle we look, love is abundant. So, again, the heart of even this Mothering Sunday reflection, is love.

Look at the disciple ['though unnamed, he is always thought to be John] the only one of Jesus' disciples, the only man, prepared to take the risk of being with Jesus during this terrible time. Loving his Lord, John does the only thing he can - he is there, with Jesus.

Look at Mary. The awful agony of watching her dying son so clearly shows us Mary's nature, as her love becomes an image for our mothering care. She demonstrates the vulnerability of love; that it suffers, that it takes risks; that true love is like a double-edged sword, that to love someone is to risk the pain of parting. Yet, not to love is never to have lived.

Look at Jesus. Loving his Mother, he ensures her future well-being with the disciple; he takes care of her.

When we look at this horrific scene, we see love from every angle.

But.... Yet.... And... ...there's even more going on here, something which changes the world forever. In bringing together Mary and John, Jesus creates a new family. In the shadow of the cross, a new people, a new home, a new community is formed; the Church is established.

From those two who believe in Jesus, wearing their hearts on their sleeves, willing to take risks for him, the Church develops. In their new relationship Mary and John offer comfort, strength, encouragement; they share joy, hope, hospitality; the Church is given examples of how to behave.

These features of the Church remain. Today we are still called to wear our hearts on our sleeves, to take risks for, to be known as believers in, and followers of Jesus, who died for us and rose again; and who draws us into his family, to offer comfort, support, encouragement; to share joy, hope and hospitality, to those within and those without.

This is the heart of the Good News of Jesus. And while it is not something we can necessarily say with pastel flowers and chocolates, it most certainly is Love. Amen.

HYMN **Jesus put this song into our hearts [x2]**

It's a song of joy no-one can take away;

Jesus put this song into our hearts

Jesus gave us mothers who have nurtured us [x2]

sharing what they have with their children

Jesus gave us mothers who have nurtured us.

Jesus gave us others who have cared for us [x2]

fed us, clothed us, helped us when we were in need

Jesus gave us others who have cared for us.

Jesus taught us how to be a family [x2]

loving one another with the love that he gives

Jesus taught us how to be a family.

Jesus showed us how we all should love and care [x2]

loving one another with the love that he gives;

Jesus showed us how we all should love and care.

Jesus put this song into our hearts [x2]

It's a song of joy no-one can take away;

Jesus put this song into our hearts. [HOY!]

We declare our faith in God...

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

WE PRAY TOGETHER



Our prayers today pick up themes from Mary's Song [The Magnificat] where Mary is expressing her delight in her unexpected pregnancy.

Gracious Father,
on this Mothering Sunday we give thanks for the unique privilege of having children to bring up. We feel so unprepared; we feel such responsibility; we often feel overwhelmed. Help us to rest in the knowledge that we could be asked to no more important thing than to love, guide and nurture a

new life. In so doing, we're sharing in your divine activity of loving, guiding and nurturing the whole human race.

And so, with Mary, we pray;

**My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.**

We pray for mothers and fathers everywhere;

- young parents over-awed by the task and the depth of their feelings,
- older parents thrilled beyond measure that at last a child has come,
- parents who are single, poor and scared.

Hasten the day, Lord, when parents everywhere can say, with Mary;

**The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and Holy is his name**

We pray for those who are without children;

- those who've made the choice and are happy,
- those who've not made the choice and are desperate for a child,
- those seeking help and waiting anxiously, month by month,
- those trying to adopt and going through a long process.

Hasten the day, Lord, when all can say,

He has shown strength with his arm and lifted up the lowly.

We pray for the family lives of the nation, upon which so much depends. We know that good experience of family life leads to good family life in the next generation. Be among us to bless, guide and keep safe all special units of love, patience and forgiveness.

And continue to teach us the way of Jesus, who knew the security of a stable, loving family.

So, may we all come to say, with Mary;

**The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and Holy is his name.**

**May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, ever more. Amen.**

Praise God who loves us,

praise God who cares.



OUR SERVICE DRAWS TO A CLOSE

HYMN

Now thank we all our God

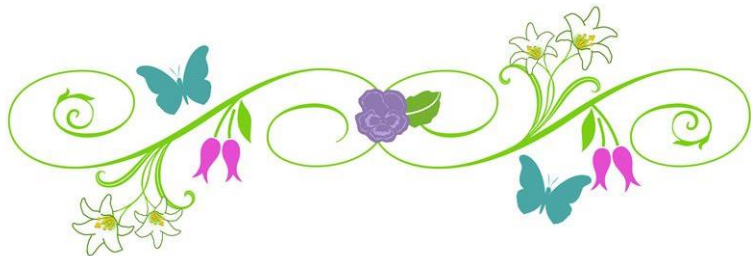
with hearts, and hands, and voices;
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom His world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms,
hath blest us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever-joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in His grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and Him who reigns
with Them in highest heaven;
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Praise God who loves us,
praise God who cares.

May blessing and laughter and loving be ours.
May the love of a great God
who names us and holds us
while the earth turns and the flowers grow, be ours.
This moment, this day, this night and forever. **Amen.**



*Some material for this service is drawn from: The Pattern of our Days
The Iona Community, edited by Kathy Galloway
Intercessions adapted from 'The Second Intercessions Handbook' by John Pritchard
Hymns taken from missionpraise.com
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Service compiled and reflection written by Claire*