



**Reflections & Prayers for Sunday  
14<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Mothering Sunday**



On Mothering Sunday, many of us thank God for the women who have had the greatest impact on our lives, and celebrate their unconditional love and sacrifice. For others, however, Mothering Sunday brings mixed emotions, and it can take real tenacity and trust in the Holy Spirit to give love and to feel loved.

Today we remember before God families of all kinds, as they navigate the joys and challenges of family life, and ask for his blessing upon them. We remember our own families, and those who have mothered us.

The prophet Hosea wrote, *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ... It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.”* The prophet clearly depicts God like a mother who loves her child – a mother whose love is infinite, and eternal.

*Lauryn*

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## Readings for this Sunday

***You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week:***

Exodus 2: 1-10 A mother's brave decision

Colossians 3: 12-17 "Put on love"

**Luke 2: 28-35** A mother's insight

Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,  
'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all  
peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about  
him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined  
for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so  
that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own  
soul too.'

## Reflection from the Revd Jill Suttie

Cards for a day like Mothering Sunday come in numerous options: much as I enjoy  
hearts and flowers, I have to admit I have a preference for the ones that are rather  
tongue-in-cheek and shed a bit of light on the dilemmas and real-life experience of  
motherhood. Like the one I read which said, 'The quickest way to get your child's  
attention is to sit down and look comfortable.' Or this rather rueful comment, which I  
think was actually on a fridge magnet: 'The trouble with being a parent is that by the

time you are experienced, you are unemployed.’ Questionable, I think, as to whether you are *ever* unemployed as a mother, however old your offspring!

But, whatever our views and preferences, and whether we have children or not, I hope we have enough fellow feeling to appreciate that parenthood, joyful though it may be, can often be quite tough. Mothering Sunday itself can raise a number of different feelings in us, but whatever they are, motherhood has lot to teach us, and especially when we look at the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Truth to tell, Mary features relatively briefly in the gospel stories, but there’s often a great deal packed into just a few verses, and today’s Gospel reading is no exception. Mary and Joseph are bringing their son to be presented at the temple as the Jewish Law required. You may remember we read this very passage a few weeks ago at Candlemas. But today I want to focus for a few minutes not directly on that prophecy of Simeon, but on Mary’s response to those words.

It had been quite a year for Mary – and not always an easy one. Think about it: she’d been propelled from obscurity with an angelic visitation; heard the astounding news that she was to bear God’s own son, the Messiah; dealt with the reaction not just of Joseph, but presumably the whole community in Nazareth where she lived; endured the discomfort of that long trek to Bethlehem with all the uncertainty of where she would give birth - and welcomed those first strange visitors. And Mary pondered and reflected on all of it; we know that from her response to the shepherds’ visit. Perhaps she began to understand even then that the demands on her would be a good deal more even than those of any other young mother.

And then she hears those haunting words of Simeon: “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” (2:34)

As a Jewish mother, Mary wouldn’t have been the first to offer her firstborn son in God’s service. But the future for *her* son would be something else – would bring about the fall and rise of so many, according to Simeon’s prophecy. And Mary was God’s instrument in bringing this about - full of maternal pride, I’m sure, as she saw him preaching and teaching, and healing the crowds, but maybe anxious too as his enemies plotted against him. Then, finally, she had to witness that terrible death by crucifixion. Mary’s heart was surely pierced, as she watched her son suffering and dying on a Cross. He wasn’t simply *offering* sacrifices to God; he *was* the sacrifice.

And I wonder if this amazing woman somehow realised even then the significance of that death; that her son had died for the sins of the world, had died for *her*?

It's said that parental love the purest and greatest kind because it is unselfish and sacrificial, pouring itself out for the benefit of their child, and ultimately letting them go. And usually that's to independence and adulthood; it's why we celebrate today the loving sacrifice of those who have nurtured us, and why we grieve with those whose experience has sadly been different.

That sacrificial mother-love shown by Mary caused her to suffer as she watched her son fulfil his awesome destiny, and probably many times in the years beforehand too. But we can't use that word 'sacrifice' at this mid-way point on our journey through Lent without seeing the Cross, and understanding that the very best of all human loves are an imperfect reflection of God's. It is God who is often described as a mother in the Bible – nurturing, comforting, fiercely defending – one who walks with us and who loves us enough to grant us our independence – but, of course, who longs for us to turn and cleave to him.

And, just as we can receive and know that love of God, whoever we are, so we can reach out with that love to others. Whatever our past experiences, whether we are mothers or not, parents or not, young, old, male or female...what the eucharist reminds us every time is that we can each receive the healing and nurturing love of God. And, receiving it, we can learn by his grace, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to 'love as he loves us.' And we can bring that compassionate and sacrificial love of God into the lives of everyone we meet.

## Prayers

### **The Collect for Mothering Sunday**

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.

### **A Litany for Biblical mothers**

Eve, mother of our humanity,  
Teach us true wisdom, that all life is precious in God's sight.

Sarah, Hanna and Elizabeth, yearning for a child,  
Comfort and strengthen all who know the pain of infertility.

Hagar, condemned to the harshness of exile,  
Sustain those who struggle to feed their sons and daughters.

Rebecca, bride from a far-off land,  
Welcome women who must bring up their families amongst strangers.

Rachel, weeping for her children,  
Weep for all mothers whose children have disappeared.

Jochebed, mother of Moses and Miriam,  
Lend your ingenuity to women who seek protection for their children.

Naomi and Ruth, bound together by a love greater than blood,  
Show us how bitter disappointment can become the sweetness of hope.

Mary, daughter of Israel, mother of Jesus,  
Share with us God's secrets that you have pondered deep within your heart.

Clare Amos, in "Live Simply: a CAFOD resource for Living"  
2008 Canterbury Press

### **A Prayer for Mothering Sunday, from the Mothers' Union**

He reaches out to hold us in His arms, piece by piece  
He makes us whole again,  
and in His love-filled hands we are transformed.  
So Lord, help us to build relationships  
in all the corners of our hearts.  
To be like you, to love like you,  
to heal brokenness and restore wholeness  
in families worldwide. Amen



## Parish Prayers for the week ahead

### In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Chile
Monday	The Diocese of Awerial – The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
Tuesday	The Diocese of Awgu/Aninri – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Wednesday	The Diocese of Awka – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Thursday	The Diocese of Awori – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Friday	The Diocese of Ayod – The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
Saturday	The Diocese of Badagry – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

### In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Marston Moreteyne with Lidlington (Deanery of Bedford)
Monday	Parish of Renhold (Deanery of Bedford)
Tuesday	Parish of Wilshamstead (Deanery of Bedford)
Wednesday	Parish of Wootton (Deanery of Bedford)
Thursday	Parish of Bourne End (Deanery of Berkhamsted)
Friday	Parish of Great Berkhamsted (Deanery of Berkhamsted)
Saturday	Parish of Great Gaddesden (Deanery of Berkhamsted)

### For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Cravells Road, Croftwell
Monday	Cross Lane, Dark Lane
Tuesday	The Deerings, Dellcroft Way
Wednesday	Dickinsons Field, East Common
Thursday	Eastcote Drive, Eastmoor Park
Friday	Ennis Close, Fairmead Avenue
Saturday	Fairway Close, Field Close

**The Sick:**

Amy, Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Enid, Chris, Sophie, Janet and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

**For the recently deceased:**

Susan Eastwood, Trevor Neal

**On their year's mind:**

Elsie Gray, William Baker, Gordon Daborn, Christine Lockett, Joyce Lines, Kenneth Weekes, Ernest Mortimer, Gordon Taylor, Patricia Hewetson, Alex South.

**LENT WEEK 4: from our Lent@Home offering**

Week beginning 14th March - *chocolate! Can you find a chocolate somewhere in your house? (Maybe a little one leftover from Christmas?)*



This week the church remembers the mothering love of God. In the middle of Lent we give thanks for all who show us this mothering love - a strong love, a challenging love, an encouraging love, a healing love.

Reflect on these Bible Verses:

May your father and mother rejoice; may she who gave you birth be joyful!  
Proverbs 23:25 (NIV)

When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. John 19:26-27 (NIV)

She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Proverbs 31:25-28 (NIV)

Take time to reflect and give thanks for those who have “mothered” you - physically and spiritually. Enjoy your chocolate - or give it away to someone else!

*Prayer: 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*

### Annual Electoral Roll update:

Our annual update of the Electoral Roll. The timetable is as follows:

Activity	Dates
Annual revision of the Electoral Roll	Now – Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> March
Electoral Roll on display in Church Porch	Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April – Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> April

Although the headline is “Annual revision of the Electoral Roll”, in practice, it is simply the two weeks of the year when we most actively encourage update and changes can be made at any time [except between the end of the formal revision and the APCM]. So, if you are not yet on the Roll and want to be added, please ask Julie in the Parish Office for the form; if you have changes (eg a new address), then, again, please let Julie in the Parish Office know. If you have any questions, please let me know (01582 768128).

Thank you

Neil Middleton  
Electoral Roll Officer

### [A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

**Daily Hope** – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.