

SUNDAY MARCH 14TH 2021

MOTHERING SUNDAY

About today's Readings

As well as today being the Fourth Sunday of Lent (see the other leaflet) today is Mothering Sunday. With the whole Church, we give thanks for our mothers - whether they are still alive in this world or whether they have died - and we remember fondly everything they ever did for us. We give thanks that we are part of "mother Church" and that we are children, by adoption, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is the epitome of perfection - full of grace - in her example of motherhood and care which she continues to show to us all. We also, today, give thanks for what St. Francis of Assisi called "Mother Earth" - for the world in which we live, which also nurtures us and provides us with our food and drink and our sustenance for living. We can also give thanks for the signs and joys of Spring, all around us now.

Our first reading, from the book of Proverbs, is a reminder of the joy of family life, and of the extent to which happy families so much depend on the love and the work of the wife and mother of the family. There is no such thing as "retirement" for a housewife or for a mother - and although we no longer think of women in terms only of domesticity, this reading from Proverbs is many centuries ahead of its time, as it sees the woman **not** as someone subservient, but rather as the driving and enabling force in the family relationships and family life. Today provides us with an opportunity to remember again just how much our mothers have done for us - perhaps recently, and perhaps many years ago - and to say "Thank You". We can pray for our mothers who are still alive among us. And we can still pray for our mothers, even if they died long ago, and we can give thanks that they are now part of the greater family of God. We can also think about the ways in which we might pass on to others, some of the blessings and values and gifts which our mothers once gave to us, or which - in some cases - they continue to give us to this day.

St. Paul, in our second reading, writes about the Christian virtues of kindness and humility which - as he puts it - "binds everything together in perfect harmony" - and Paul also reminds us always to be thankful, and always to be thinking and working and speaking and acting in the name of Jesus. In that way, nobody is left out of Mothering Sunday - everyone is included, even if they do not have parents or children or relatives of their own. The Christian family is a family from which no-one is omitted, regardless of marital status or whether or not they are parents.

Today's Gospel reading is one of the more difficult passages from the Bible to understand fully. Jesus and his mother were, we know, devoted to one another; she was at the foot of his cross at the end; and in his last words he commended her to the care of the beloved disciple. And yet, when she and other relatives of Jesus came to speak to him, he appears almost to have refused to see them. He says that "whoever does the will" of God is "my brother, my sister, my mother". Whether Jesus later did go outside to speak to his family, we are not told. But in the words he spoke to the assembled people there, he showed us that everyone is a part of his family, if they do what God wants. We have, then, a further reminder that Mothering Sunday is about ALL people and ALL relationships - and that love and co-operation with one another and also with the will of God, is the key to happy families and happy homes.

Some prayers for Mothering Sunday

Today we give special thanks to God for the love of our parents, living and departed, and especially for the love of our mothers, both now and in past years. And those of us who are mothers ourselves, give thanks for that great gift.

We give thanks for the care and attention of devoted mothers everywhere; for the sacrifices they make; for all they mean to us; for the happiness of our family life; and for our homes where we both give and receive security and love.

We give thanks for our Spiritual Mother - the Church - which we joined when we were baptized. We thank you for the work and teaching of our Church; for our faith in Jesus, and for the ways we are taught love and peace and truth.

We thank you for all people who are married, and we pray that all homes may be places of safety, security, truth and love. We pray for kind treatment for all children; and we pray that children in their turn may love and honour and respect their parents.

We pray for all people who long to have children but who are unable to have them; for all unwanted and neglected children; and for all children who do not have parents alive. And we pray for all who are unmarried, asking that all these people mentioned here may not feel left out of this day, but may find love among their relatives and friends.

We pray for all children of other lands, especially those who grow up in places of violence, in places of hunger and want, and in places with no proper homes or schools or hospitals, and where future prospects seem bleak.

We pray for all mothers who have died. We give thanks that they are now with God. We long and pray for the day when we will see them again. We ask God to keep them safe with him, and ever living in our hearts.

Lord Jesus, you yourself know well what blessings are to be found in a loving earthly home. We thank you for the life and example of your own mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary; for her motherhood of all Christians; and for her life and example. Receive our thanks for all the love we have enjoyed in our homes, especially from those who nurtured us - in some cases long ago, now - from our earliest years. Hear our prayer for mothers everywhere, and grant that they may never lose heart nor ever be taken for granted, but rather that they may - with Mary your mother - receive the honour they deserve. Bless them and keep them, now and for ever, and bless us all today, we pray. AMEN.