

Our Service Together

Mothering Sunday

March 19th 2023



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, as a mother feeds her children at the breast you feed us with the food and drink of eternal life: help us who have tasted your goodness to grow in grace within the household of faith. Alleluia

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 34.11-20 *We say the psalm aloud*

Come, my children, and listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Who is there who delights in life and longs for days to enjoy good things?

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from lying words.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open to their cry.

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.

The righteous cry and the Lord hears them and delivers them out of all their troubles.

The Lord is near to the broken hearted and will save those who are crushed in spirit.

Many are the troubles of the righteous; from them all will the Lord deliver them.

He keeps all their bones, so that not one of them is broken.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Exodus 2.1-10

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. ³When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel Luke 2.33-35

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ 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 ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

Mothers are key figures within the whole Judeo-Christian faith story! They are the teachers of the faith to the young and often the focus for God's life giving blessings.

On Mothering Sunday, we find many reflections focus on Jesus' mother Mary and miss the other great mothers that the Bible would draw us to. Of course, looking back only to Mary has been a key feature of Western Christianity for centuries, however I do wonder if Mary herself would have been shocked and horrified at this! The Mary we read about is for sure a string lady, but is also a woman of great humility when it comes to the things of God. This is born out in today's gospel as Mary, and Joseph, are 'amazed' at what was being said of their child. It does make you wonder if up to this moment Mary saw her conception as one of many stories of 'being with child' within the blessing of God that permeate the bible.

Of course there was the 'blessing' received by Mary's cousin Elizabeth. However, the most famous of these is the blessing received by the 'mother' of the faith – as Mary would have called Sarai. All Jews would have traced their faith heritage back to the father and mother of the faith, Abram and Sarai, who, following the blessing and covenant take on adjusted names and are known as Abraham and Sarah. If folks were to look to a mother figure in the faith then I suspect Mary would rather we looked to Sarah than to herself; in the end I suspect Mary would rather we all looked to her son Jesus and his works as God's Messiah, as our Christ, than to anyone else at all!

Mothering Sunday has had several notable titles and focus over the centuries, from 'Mothering Sunday' in the sense of the church's role for society, 'Laetare Sunday' – meaning 'rejoicing', through to 'Holy Laughter' day – arguably, both of these later terms point us towards Sarah.

You will remember the story of the elderly Abram and Sarai, old beyond child bearing, who are visited by three 'strangers' (taken theologically to be the Trinitarian God manifested in 3 persons). These men are entertained and given food and drink by Abram who is then blessed by them. He is told that the three will come visit again in a year and that Abram's wife will have born him an heir by then. Sarai overhears this and laughs because she is too old. However, she does have a son and so begins the story of our faith – with blessing, promise and with holy laughter.

I wonder, if, in her darkest moments of mother-hood, when it felt like her heart was pierced by a sword, Mary thought back to Sarah and remembered that God blesses, makes promises which are kept and invites us to respond, even if it is with incredulous laughter.

I wonder if today she would ask us also to look back to the foundation of our faith, yes to Sarah and Abraham, to God's visiting them, as three persons - Father, Son and Spirit, blessing them with the promise of new life, but more so to her son, to Jesus the Messiah who brings to reality the consolation Israel and renewal of humanity in and through his death and resurrection. This is something we can rejoice about today!

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

Blessed are you Lord our God, for you have created us all. We are your children, loved by you and ever under your care and protection. We thank you for our life, your love and all that you give to us. Blessed are you Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We thank God for giving us others to share in our lives: For parents, and the love which brought us to birth:
We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today.

For mothers who have cherished and nurtured us: We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today. For fathers who have loved and supported us,
We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today.

For brothers and sisters with whom we have shared our home:
We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today.

For children and their parents: We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today. For relatives and friends, who have been with us in our hopes and joys and times of sadness:
We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today.

For all who first spoke to us of Jesus, and have drawn us into the family of our Father in heaven:
We praise you, O Lord; and bring you thanks today.

Help us to live as those who belong to one another, and to you, our Father, now and always. **Amen**

The Collect

All: God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.