

Week 37: March 10th



Mothering Sunday

If you have been in any stationery shops over the past few weeks you will have seen many cards, usually with flowers on them, most of them proclaiming "Happy Mother's Day" or hopefully "Happy Mothering Sunday".

I am fortunate that my mom in her 90's is alive and each year I spend some time searching out an appropriate card to send to her, it has to be tasteful, not too sickly sweet and has on it either "Happy Mothering Sunday" or "Thinking of you on Mothering Sunday". Last year believe it or not I brought my card in Lytham St Annes, my sister brought hers in Llandudno and we chose the same card! So this year I've made her one! But for me the card must say Mothering Sunday and not Mothers Day because that is something very different to Mothering Sunday.

In the Christian Church the fourth Sunday in Lent has from the 12th Century been celebrated as Mothering Sunday. A day when you were called to go and visit your mother Church, the place of your baptism or upbringing. Mothering Sunday was also a festival day so on that day despite it being in Lent, you could have sweet things and so the custom grew up for Simnel Cakes to be eaten, (fruitcakes with marzipan in the middle).

Mothers Day is very different. In 1905 in America a lady called Anna J. Jarvis wanted to say thank you for her mother who had just died, So she wrote thousands of letters asking everyone she contacted to honour and remember their mothers, and in 1913 the American Senate decided that the second Sunday in May would become Mothers Day. In the second World War, the American Soldiers over here not only wanted to send cards back home, but wanted to give presents and cards to their landladies and women friends who had made them welcome, and so Mothering Sunday became for them a suitable day for Mothers Day and that is why we have the two titles now.

So there you have it, Mothering Sunday and a Church based celebration dating back to hundreds of years or Mothers Day started less than a hundred years ago, but both do the same thing, it gives us a chance to say thank you for those who care and nurture us. (Sometimes these people may not be our birth mothers but we want to honour and say thank you to them for being like a mother to us).

Mothering Sunday though can be a painful time for those unable to be mothers, for those who have lost their children and for children without mothers, I have known people stay away from church on this day as they have felt excluded. Thankfully most churches give something to all the women as a gift, but my plea is that we are sensitive to all for whom Mothering Sunday is a sad time.

Mothering Sunday for me is about saying thank you to God for my Mum, and all the love, nurture and care I receive from the church, and for the love that God, my parent God has for me.

Loving God, always there for us, we worship and adore you.

Loving God, calling out to us, we come to listen for your voice.

Loving God, always ready to forgive, we come to know your forgiving love.

Loving God, who is both mother and Father to us and who always ready to receive us,

we come to you in order to be sent out again in your name to share your love with others and to bring them to know you as their parent God too. Loving God, who is both mother and Father to us and always there for us, we worship and adore you. Amen