

Into all the world – Reflections for Lent 2021

Week 4 – 14th March (Mothering Sunday)

Written by Elaine Phillips

Like many traditions and festivities, Mothering Sunday began with a religious purpose. It is held on the fourth Sunday of Lent, three weeks before Easter Sunday. It was originally a day to honour and give thanks to the Virgin Mary, also known as Mother Mary. Such celebrations required people to visit their “mother” church – the main church or cathedral in a family’s area. The spread of Christianity throughout Europe in the 16th century increased the celebrations and firmly put Mothering Sunday, on the calendar. The gatherings reunited families and gave children who worked as domestic servants or as apprentices away from home the opportunity to have the day off to join their family and see their mothers.

Mary was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. It must have been with great pride that Mary watched her son grow up. Yet bringing up Jesus was not easy – there is the story that as a 12 year old Jesus went missing for three days Mary must have been distraught but fortunately he was found in the Temple and he told her that she shouldn’t have worried as he had been in his father’s house.

As the time came for Jesus to marry, Mary would have been expected to look around for a suitable wife for her son. Instead she may have had to explain to Jesus that sometimes a special call from God precluded marriage. When Jesus finally left home to embark on his ministry Mary was disappointed that from the start he got mixed up with the wrong sort of people. He met with tax-collectors, prostitutes and other dubious characters. However, she must have been happy by the way in which the crowds initially flocked to hear Jesus speak. What mother would not have been proud of a son who taught and healed like Jesus? There was then the pain of seeing her child die before her. She may not have understood him or approved of the path in life he had taken but she stood by him come what may. Jesus was still her son. Mary reflected true motherhood.



To ponder: What lengths would you go to protect and support your child? We may not always approve of the path in life chosen by our child but a mother’s love will always be there whatever the outcome.

Prayer: *Loving God, as we see the brokenness of the world, we pray for healing among the nations, for food where there is hunger, for freedom where there is oppression; for joy where there is pain, for peace among all your children. Just as a mother watches her children, you see the damage we do in your world and you forgive our selfishness, greed and stupidity. May your love strengthen us so we can work to change ourselves and the world. Amen.*

Bible link: Luke 2: 48–51 When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him “Child, why have you treated us like this?” ... He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Hymn: *Singing the Faith* 120 We gladly celebrate and praise, the gift so great and good,
through which God’s kindness is made known: the gift of motherhood.