

**Sermon preached by the Rev'd Cynthia Jackson, St. Mary's Wimbledon,
Mothering Sunday, 6th March 2016.**

Mothering Sunday for some people can be a day of rejoicing but for others it is a sad or difficult day.

We firstly think of our own mothers and thank God for them. We remember all mothers who are sad because they are separated from their children. We think of many mothers who do not know where their children are; missing perhaps due to war. We remember those who have mothers who have died as we give thanks for their lives and all they mean to us.

In our first reading we heard the well-known story of Moses placed in the bulrushes by his mother put Moses in order to save his life.

The baby was found by Pharaoh's daughter who employed his mother as a nurse to look after him. How hard it must have been for Moses' mother not to show that she was his mother instead of just his nurse. Many children today are not able to be brought up by their own mothers and may be placed in foster care or are adopted. As any of you know who have watched the television programme '*Long Lost Family*' what a lot of heartache there is for mothers, fathers and children separated split apart for many years.

We secondly think of those who take on a mothering role and that is why it is good that the Church calls this Sunday Mothering Sunday rather than Mothers Day.

Many people, not just mothers but men and women young and old take on a mothering role and care for children. Fathers do, grandparents, uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters all take on mothering roles. Some children too have to take on a mothering role for their own mothers.

God shows his love for each one of us by working through people when we are mothered or cared for by other family members or friends or neighbours. Organisations too such as Welcare play a very important role in preventative work to enable families to stay together

In our Gospel reading we heard how just before Jesus died he was very concerned about who would look after Mary, his mother after his death. The Gospel writer tells us that Jesus asked his disciple John to look after Mary and to take her into his home.

That brings me to the third mother we think about today Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, sometimes referred to as the Blessed Virgin Mary, or just Our Lady, or St. Mary, our patron saint of course. We have a picture of Mary in stained-glass window behind the high altar. She is resplendent in a blue robe. Mary has either been venerated or maligned during the history of the Christian Church.

Pictures of Mary, especially Icons often depict her with a sad expression on her face as she knows that Jesus will die a painful death. We are reminded of that each time we read Luke's Gospel telling us the story of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple in which the prophecy of Simeon is recorded:

"...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...” (Luke 2:34 – 35)

Grieving mothers can identify with those last words of Simeon.

Icons portray Mary pointing to Jesus. Mary said yes to God when she was told by the Angel Gabriel that she was to be the mother of God’s son, Jesus. Although she was afraid she said yes To God. There are many hymns in our English Hymnal in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her response to God such as :

‘Tell out my Soul the greatness of the Lord’
 based on the Magnificat or
‘Sing we of the blessed Mother who received the angel’s word’.
(New English Hymnal)

As Mary knew that she had the strength and love of God to support her we too know that when we have difficult decisions or difficult tasks to do that we are not left on our own. We have the love of God and Jesus to support us. Mother Julian of Norwich writes in her *‘Revelations of Divine Love’*:

“.....As truly God is our father, so just as truly is he our mother. In our father, God Almighty, we have our being; in our merciful mother we are remade and restored. Our fragmented lives are built together and made perfect...And by giving and yielding ourselves through the Holy Spirit we are made whole...”
(Enfolded in Love – Daily Readings from Julian of Norwich – edt. R. Llewlllyn)

We also know that we are supported by being a member of the Christian community called the Church which is the 4th Mother I want us to think about today.

How can the church be our mother? A building cannot be a mother, but the Church is more than a building. The Church looks after us from ‘Birth to Death’.

We become members of the Church through Baptism. The Church teaches us and prepares us for Holy Communion and Confirmation. Some of us are called to serve the church following Ordination.

We receive spiritual nourishment through this service of Holy Communion when we meet Jesus especially in bread and wine. The Church witnesses to couples as they are married and begin their married life together. The Church nurtures us through the Sacraments of Anointing and Absolution.

The Church cares about us when we are sick – pastoral care is an important part of the life of the church. We pray for those who sick and visit them.

At the end of our life the Church is there at our death to conduct our funeral and comfort those who mourn.

But most importantly the Church is made up of people, you and me. Mothering Sunday is about the Love of God, working through people, through mothers, through all who take on a mothering role, through Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and the example she showed. Lastly it is about the Church, its teaching, nurture and the Love of God that we each receive in order that we may go out into the world and share that love with other people. Amen.

