

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 14 MARCH 2021 – MOTHERING SUNDAY

COLLECT

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.

Psalm 34.11-20

- 11 Come, my children, and listen to me; ♦
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
- 12 Who is there who delights in life ♦
and longs for days to enjoy good things?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil ♦
and your lips from lying words.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good; ♦
seek peace and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous ♦
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, ♦
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry and the Lord hears them ♦
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted ♦
and will save those who are crushed in spirit.
- 19 Many are the troubles of the righteous; ♦
from them all will the Lord deliver them.
- 20 He keeps all their bones, ♦
so that not one of them is broken.

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2 Corinthians 1.3-7

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, 4 who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. 6 If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

Luke 2.33-35

33 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."

Reflection – this week from Mary-Lou

A special mother, with a very special baby! That's the scene St Luke paints for us in our Bible reading. To the Temple in Jerusalem come the new parents, Joseph and Mary. And cradled in Mary's arms lies that most special baby – Jesus. They've come to give thanks and to dedicate him, to offer him to God, his Father, in the holiest place.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of the Temple courts, full of people, animals, birds, noise and probably smells too, they might just be overlooked, one more new baby boy and his family. Nothing to notice here! Except they bump into a couple of people who seem to be waiting for them, ready to notice, ready to see just how wonderful this baby is!

They're stopped in their tracks, and both Simeon and Anna praise God in wonder and delight at seeing Jesus! Mary and Joseph are amazed. They can't believe what's being said about their little one! But the thing is, this is God's Little One.

It's probably always been an exciting and lovely thing, to take a new baby out and show him or her to people. What you hope for as a new parent are smiles, lots of admiring and nice things being said about how bonny the baby is, how much he looks like his Dad, or how much she looks like Mum. What Mary hears is not quite like that. Yes, there are lots of lovely words said about Jesus, but then Simeon looks at his mother hard, and says: *and a sword will pierce your own soul too*. The happy mood has changed. Sorrow and pain lie down the road of mothering for Mary.

This is our second Mothering Sunday with Coronavirus. Can you believe it? Since those early days of the pandemic last year, so very many people have faced great sorrow, great pain. We've been separated, from parents, grandparents, great grandparents, godparents, teachers, friends – you name it. Unable to hug, or even touch those we love, for so long. It's brought such worry, such sadness and sorrow over so many parts of life and for so many people we love. And many thousands have had to face the pain of goodbyes.

'Mothering' is really a way of saying 'loving'. And loving is – always - costly. For Mary it would mean seeing the little one she carried in her arms in the Temple – God's son - grow to be a man, who'd be seen as such a danger to the authorities that he'd die on a cross. And she'd be there, standing close by, watching and holding on, suffering for him, suffering with him. For that's how it is when we love. And Mary's love is love that does not leave, love that is constant, love that is true.

Mary's love reflects the love God has for his beloved Son, and the love God pours out for all of creation at the cross.

We mark this Sunday with gifts, and flowers and treats as a thank you, especially for those who have mothered us, for those who have loved us. Let's praise God for the love that has surrounded us through our lives, the love shown to us through this long, dark year of lockdowns and separation that has held us through the darkness – the love that got us through.

And let's praise God most of all, for the love he has shown in coming to us, in Mary's little one, Jesus. This is love that can transform all of us. Love that can change the world!

May God bless you and all those you love this Mothering Sunday and always.
Amen.