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MOTHERING SUNDAY A

19th March 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening and centering prayer

Heavenly Father,
Divine Mother,
God of all grace,
I look to you for rest, I worship you, and I seek to know more of your call on my life this day.

[Pause]

In this Lenten season,
May you refresh and renew me by your Spirit of power and inspiration.
Today, as I pray, I place my trust wholly in you and ask that you might light the path before my feet.

Loving Lord, I am seeking to be present to this time of worship. Guide me, and your whole church, all around that world, that we might trust in your guidance and wisdom.

[Pause]

For the times of struggle I have faced this week and even on this day, I rely on your presence to dwell deep inside me. For the struggles that I am facing today, bring your healing and your hope, O God.

Nourish and enrich my soul in worship this day.

Give me eyes to see you Lord,
Give me ears open to hear from you, and
Give me a heart open to receive from you,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are most familiar or comfortable.

Hymn:

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! - [YouTube](#)

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Reading: John 19:25-27 – [Click for the reading](#)

Response to the reading

Today is Mothering Sunday, a day of mixed emotions for many, a day of thanking, remembering, regretting, forgiving (or not-managing-to-forgive), gratitude, celebration,

grief and – in some cases – straightforward agony. Whatever you are feeling, whatever cocktail of emotions you bring to the table this day, Mothering Sunday is an invitation to think about some Biblical models of motherhood, the ‘motherness’ of God, and Jesus’ relationship with his earthly mother.

When Jesus on the cross asks one of his closest friends to take his mother Mary as his own mother, this is human nature at its most real. In the midst of pain, in the bleak landscape of calvary, a small flower of love blooms as two human beings look to one another for comfort. Although the grief of Jesus’ followers at the foot of the cross must have been inconsolable, love was both its cause and its cure. Love makes way for healing in a way nothing else can. Love and brokenness are entwined.

This is incarnation. Jesus, the divine son of God, the perfect embodiment of love, comes to earth and is crucified. The breaking of his body is the ultimate act of love, an act that makes redemption possible for each one of us. His body is broken, and his love poured out for the sake of our brokenness.

The message of the Gospel is not: God’s love means we all get a happy ending. The message of the Gospel is not: God’s love will stop bad things happening to us. Instead, the Gospel story tells us that we have a God who is with us in the midst of our lives, bearing and sharing our pain, and pouring out a perfect love into our broken hearts – a love which might just, if we let it, redeem us, heal us, save us.

Questions for you to ponder, or discuss with someone you trust, or to start conversations this week:

- What does ‘love’ mean to you?
- Who is the most healthy/helpful model of motherhood that you can think of? What makes this person such a good example of what a mother can be?
- To what extent is it helpful to refer to God as ‘mother’?

Hymn:

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

God of all grace, show me how to embody your human, broken, precious love in all that I do this day, this week, and beyond.

God of all hope, show me how to stand with those most in need, as you stand with me in my times of suffering and pain.

Show me what is mine to do, in the healing of this whole world, in Jesus’ name,

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 20th March

- Today is the feast day of Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, who also gives his name to the little uninhabited island off the coast of Lindisfarne that is only accessible at low tide. The story goes that he would retreat there just as the tide was rising to enable him to have some peace and quiet during the following 8-9 hours, in which he could pray in silence, surrounded by the wildness of nature.
- Could you pray for 8 or 9 hours at a time? If that's unachievable, perhaps today you can commit to praying 5 or 10 minutes more than you would normally. Find a space, or a moment, where you can be still, you can notice what is happening around you, and focus your mind on God.
- If you can't think of the words to say in prayer, you might simply like to repeat this mantra, over and over again: 'Come near to me, Lord God, show me how to love as you love me. Come near to me, Lord God...'

Tuesday 21st March

- On this day in 1994, The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change enters into force. Much work has been done on this area in the last 29 years, but much is still to be done.
- Today, let us pray for the systemic and societal change we need to tackle the climate crisis and adjust our way of living and being to make space for the whole planet to flourish.

Wednesday 22nd March

- God of all grace, thank you for all you are doing in my life and in the world around me. Today, help me to notice your presence, and give thanks. Amen.

Thursday 23rd March

- At some point today, take a moment to look out of the window, for as long as you can / can spare. You might like to watch the horizon, or the road, or a tree near your house.
- Use the time to focus on this one space, to slow your mind, to focus on what is happening, perhaps the light is changing, the wind is blowing, there are animals, birds or bugs moving around, perhaps you can see people, cars or vans and lorries.
- Focus on the stillness, and get outside-of-yourself as you pray about what you see and notice.

Friday 24th March

- Today is the feast day of Oscar Romero, a Saint and former Bishop in the Catholic Church who was assassinated in 1980.
- Oscar Romero wrote a lovely extended piece (it's worth looking up the whole thing) that hinges on the idea of us being 'prophets of a future not our own'.
- Pray about the seeds you are planting (literal or metaphorical), even though you may never get to see the harvest or the full bloom of the ideas, projects, relationships and concepts you are sharing with the world.

Saturday 25th March

- At some point this weekend, make 5 or 10 minutes to sit in stillness and light a candle.
- It might help you to say out loud, perhaps several times: Jesus is the light of the world.
- Pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus' light might shine there.