



## **St. Mary's Church** SAWSTON

### Worship at Home – Mothering Sunday – 14<sup>th</sup> March

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

**Amen**

#### **Hymn 25: All things bright and beautiful**

#### **Welcome**

The Lord be with you,  
**and also with you**

#### **Prayer of Preparation**

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.**  
**Amen**

#### **Prayer of Confession**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen**

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

Christ have mercy

## **Christ have mercy**

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

## **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**

## **New Testament Reading: 2 Corinthians 1: 3 - 7**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, 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. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. 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. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

## **Hymn 161: Father hear the prayer we offer**

## **Gospel Reading: Luke 2: 33 - 35**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

**Glory to you, O Lord**

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ**

## **Sermon: Rosey Feuell**

It's Mothering Sunday, celebrating Mother Church as well as our own mothers, and mothering itself - Mother's Day, in the world's parlance. It's the Sunday I used to skip church once I lost my mother. It's a day some love, some find hard, perhaps because their mother is no longer here, never was there for them, or left prematurely on a disintegration journey that prevented genuine goodbyes. Or it can seem irrelevant to some who are not mothers and regret it. My thinking was that the celebration was for others, till I heard a most inclusive take on it at another church: the flowers are *for everyone who has – or ever had - a mother*. And in this we are united as human

beings and in a faith that nurtures and builds us up, something like the way good mothering does. Many life categories just don't apply to everyone: we don't all have children, cousins, jobs, wealth, sports' skills etc..but we **all had a mother**.

Jesus had one too, and in some senses can mother us, as life's shocks and challenges unfold: “.. how often have I longed to gather [you] as a hen gathers her chicks under her wing” (Matthew 23:37). Even if our actual mother is long absent or unknown, we have received major clues from that relationship, and even from its absence, clues about what we all need to thrive as people.. and we may feel the gifting most in what we long to pass on to others in their needs or affliction. For in God's economy of life, little is wasted. We are often blessed by being given what we are moved to pass on – not just chocolates, but things in the encouragement and strengthening line. Today in 2 Corinthians 1 Paul declares God “consoles us” so we may be able to console those who are in any affliction”. Our need of consolation will become a real way for others to experience consolation, comfort, encouragement. It seems to be a principle that works even better in our places of weakness; my mother, for example, was rarely encouraged at school because she wasn't top in academic subjects – but she tried all her life to encourage those who needed it, who were not in the prestigious places in the prestigious things. It made her prioritise being human.

Being a mother may be painful too as well as joyous, isolated, worrying, yet glorious: I've had the delight of watching my niece become a mother – and it reveals much. The little boy is too small to understand this, but foundations of his future development and relationships are already being laid as he gets his first experiences of what it is to be loved, comforted, cared for, shared around. And that's all something like the enfolding and affirming God gives us, that we'll be passing on; none of the mother's love is in effect for our sole sake, but for the goal of making us each into a life that can be genuine, upbuilding, and perhaps challenging, to others, and will show, even in spite of background, something of the glory of God as Creator and Saviour. Yes, His consolation flows to us, through us, onwards, like the mother's, and people are grown and strengthened in who they are.

In our Gospel Jesus is taken by Joseph His guardian and Mary, His mother, to the Temple. Her experience of mothering Him must have been at least as puzzling and painful as our own mother's more evident struggles, *or ours* if we are parents. She was surprised to bear Him, awkwardly placed, led hidden or in obscurity, from the Judean hills to Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Nazareth, never quite coming out with her full story or being understood. Here she takes Him obediently to worship, with a simple offering, and is “amazed at what was being said about Him”, His light and glory reaching all people. She heard those extraordinary prophecies of the powers and contentions Jesus sets going: “destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, a sign to be opposed”.. and then comes mention of the sword that will pierce her and Joseph's heart. It must have rocked her; we have no idea how she received it, but certainly it was part of a picture of blessing to billions of others.

This encounter must surely say something of how God reveals Himself in our relationships, giving us small glimpses of how it seems now, and where it will lead hereafter, allowing us to feel pain in situations essential to us, while he is ready, mother-like, to console us, lead us in our sufferings and our loving. The baby Jesus, loved by His mother, if not always by His own people, was to bring upheaval, but His mother offering Him to the priest, letting go, realised something more of His mystery, of His being a gift to the world.

We too may have been mysteries to our mothers or fathers, but the news seems to be that God Himself can handle and transform this, bringing a whole set of stunning outcomes in the life of His beloved child. For, even when our mothers have disappeared, we remain the beloved child,

children, with our own destiny- whatever we learned of our own belovedness earlier in life. We do not have to live judged by how we were treated at home or school. We can, says Henri Nouwen, a respected Dutch priest, know “a change from living life as a painful test to prove that we deserve to be loved, to living life as an unceasing YES to the truth of that Belovedness.. “ saying Yes to the One Who calls us beloved, and comforts hearts. (Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* p.106)

Beside that, our mother, our whole background and experience, become something else, something given to make us alive and nurtured, and something, however precious, that we are called to live beyond.. not limited by who we are, or whoever we have lost – for we are on a journey towards love that knows us, not through a glass darkly, but fully, face to face. (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12)

For God is also our Mother and the inventor of mothers – and we are in His care, His protection, His training, His lenient mercy, even if once we met strictness. We are alive to receive His mothering, His signalling of our destiny:– whether that destiny is far distant, unknown or familiar, or seen just in a mother’s safety today. My niece’s little son is just beginning that journey. In Norwich around 1373 Julian the anchoress saw God was rejoicing to be our Father and rejoicing too to be our Mother .. and in whatever senses we desire it, in Him we have overflowing consolation to carry us through. (*Revelations of Divine Love*, 52)

*Let us pray: Lord, thank You for our mothers, and all insight we gain into that role by parenting, experience or friendship; for all good relationships that help us and make others live more encouraged. We thank you for Your mothering, which helps us though we rise and fall with the state of our nation, or with the inner thoughts of our hearts. Amen*

## **Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## Prayers

On this Mothering Sunday we give you thanks Almighty God, heavenly Father, for revealing through your Son Jesus Christ, your great and powerful love for us, your children.

We give thanks this morning for all the love we have experienced through particular people who have known us, our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears, our successes and our failures. Thank you for all those who have known us and accepted and loved us and helped to make us who we are.

We pray for families across the world.

Lord we know that the intense love for our children unites us across all boundaries.

Please bless all people nurturing children. We remember especially those who feel unable to put things right for their children, though this is what they long to do. We pray for those who must look on a sick or suffering child today, Lord be near to them.

Guide governments into your ways; sustain aid agencies in their tasks; give wisdom to all who teach children; and as is your way Lord, work your miracles of love through all who reach out to help their neighbour.

We lift to you families in Yemen in particular, and also in other places of extreme distress.

We remember before you the royal family just now; we remember before you the family of the young woman abducted in London recently.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the church across the world.

Thank you for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Strengthen churches across the world as they hold out the unfailing light of the gospel. We pray that through the church many may come to know you as the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, through knowing your Son Jesus Christ. Send out labourers into your harvest fields. Through the church, enlarge your kingdom, that your will may be done on earth and we may live to your praise and glory.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for our community

As lockdown eases bring joy to mothers and all who care for children. Now schools are back we pray for laughter, lightness and joy to return; for fun and forgiveness; for peace and recovery.

Please heal families in their difficulties; preserve any good things that lockdown may have brought. We lift to you all the teachers in our communities of Sawston and Babraham. Give them courage and energy and all that they need as they try to help each child in their care to settle down to school learning again.

Give grace to us our families and friends and to all our neighbours, that we may serve Christ in one another and love as he loved us. Comfort and heal *all* those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, remembering this morning Isobel and John Darling, Margaret Grey, Angela Harradine, Mary Russen and any others for whom we pray.

Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Father of compassion, God of all comfort, in this time of pandemic, there has been so much sadness. We remember those who are grieving and lift them to you. Please bless those who minister to them.

**Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

## **The Peace**

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## **Hymn 413: Lord of all hopefulness**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.  
Now and for ever.  
Amen.**

### **Remembering the Lord's Supper**

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

## **Hymn 631: Tell out my soul**

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
**In the name of Christ. Amen**