

Mothering Sunday Service



All Hymn Numbers, unless otherwise stated taken from Hymns Old and New (New Anglican Edition 1996)

This Sunday derived its name from the verse in Paul's letter to the Galatians, "Jerusalem, the heavenly city which is mother of us all" (Galatians 4: 26) but nowadays is more associated with mothers in general. In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, when young girls were in service, they were always allowed to go home on this day to see their mothers.

Mothering Sunday comes halfway through the season of Lent and its alternative title is "Refreshment Sunday", when the rules about Lenten fasting are supposed to be relaxed. For this reason, a reading about the feeding of the five thousand is included. It used to be the custom to bake and eat a Simnel Cake, and a recipe for this is given at the end.

There is no reason why the Christian church should not combine the ideas referred to above, together with an acknowledgment of God as mother as well as father, an idea that has increasingly gained acceptance, and appears in the Bible, as well as in the writings of the saints, such as St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 12th Century and Mother Julian of Norwich.

*We have also included (1) acknowledging the mothering instinct implanted by God in animals; (2) thanking God for grandmothers or grandparents both as supporting their grown-up children and as important people in the life of their grandchildren; (3) fathers and (4) troubled family relationships. In the Prayers, where an asterisk * appears, the word parent(s) or grandparent(s) can be used*

We have referred to Jesus' grandmother who by tradition is said to be St. Anne and his grandfather is said to be St. Joachim who was a priest in the temple at Jerusalem.

We have used "the heavenly Jerusalem" as a symbol of the Christian hope and instead of putting the Confession at the beginning, we have put it later on as part of a sequence leading through forgiveness to the Christian hope - our life beyond death, reunion and enjoyment of God's presence for ever. However, this section can be split up if preferred so that the Acknowledgment and Forgiveness of Sins is put early in the service.

The old custom of "clypping" or "hugging" the church is now being used again in many places and can be introduced if felt to be appropriate. The idea is that those attending go outside and, holding hands, embrace the building in the same way as children embrace their mother. A separate Clypping Service is provided in Seasonal Worship from the Countryside.

Welcome

Today we give thanks to God both for our own mothers* and for the love and care we know through the Church.

Sentences

Honour your father and your mother,
as God commanded you
so that you may enjoy long life,
and it will be well with you in the land
which God has given you.

Deuteronomy. 5: 16 NIV

or

Each one of you must revere your mother and father.

I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus. 19: 3 NIV.

Hymn For the beauty of the earth (HO&N 137) or Hark my soul it is the Lord (HO&N 197)

Responses

Keep your father's instruction

And do not abandon the teaching of your mother.

Bind them upon your heart for ever.

And wear them close to you as a necklace.

When you walk, they will guide you.

When you rest, they will come to you;

When you sleep, they will watch over you.

When you awake, they will speak to you.

Verses from Proverbs 6: 20ff. NIV

Suggested readings

Verses from Job 38 and 39

(This is poetry and has been printed as such. It can be read by two readers, taking alternate sections.)

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Who set its corner-stone in place,

When the morning stars sang together

And all the angels of God shouted for joy?

Who watched over the birth of the sea

When it burst in flood from the womb,

When I wrapped it in a blanket of cloud

And cradled it in fog?

Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain

And clears a path for the thunderstorm?

Whose womb gave birth to the ice

And who was the mother of the frost from heaven?

Do you hunt the prey for the lioness

And satisfy the hunger of young lions

As they crouch in the lair

Or lay in wait in the covert?

Who provides the raven with its quarry
When its fledglings cry out to God for lack of food?
Do you know when the mountain-goats are born
Or attend the wild doe when she is in labour?

Do you count the months that they carry their young
Or know the time of their delivery,
When they crouch down to open their wombs
And bring their offspring to the birth?

and

When Jesus approached Jerusalem, crowds thronged the roads and shouted "'Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.'" But when Jesus saw the city, he wept over it, saying "If you, even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killed the prophets and stoned those sent to you, how often have I longed to gather your children under my wings, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not".

Matthew 21: 9ff. and Luke 13: 34ff NIV

or

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so that they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food". Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat".

"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. the number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matthew 14: 15 - 21 NIV

Prayers

O loving God, who has so ordered this world,
that children are looked after by mothers and fathers,
and others who care deeply for them;
we praise you for trusting us
with this most precious creation,
and implanting in us the desire to love and nurture.

We praise and thank you, O God.

O creator of all the world,
we thank you that we share our natural instincts
and affections with your animal creation.
Help us to see them as fellow creatures made by you,
and to learn from those of them who are good mothers and providers.

We praise and thank you, O God.

We thank you that Jesus, in his human life
was part of a family and had both a mother
and a grandmother, giving us an example for our own lives. *

We praise and thank you, O God.

We thank you that our mothers still support us when we are grown-up
and help us look after our own children;
we thank you for the deep and enduring relationship
that can spring up between grandmother and grandchild. *

We praise and thank you, O God.

We pray for those families where there is conflict and division,
where there is neglect and misunderstanding,
for those who never received love when they were young
and cannot give love in their turn

O Lord, receive our prayer.

We pray for all who have lost their mothers
or other dear ones who have cared for them
in the place of their mothers.

We pray they know they are precious to you
and may they be loved by those around them.

O Lord, receive our prayer.

We pray for those mothers and fathers who have lost children
and have to carry on their daily life
with the emptiness in heart and home.

We pray they may know that their lost ones are safe with you
and that they will be reunited.

O Lord, receive our prayer.

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 and loving
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and 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 ever.

Amen.

From Common Worship

The Lord's Prayer.

Let us join in the family prayer which Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

Hymn Bind us together (HO&N 60)

*During the hymn, children invited to come up for distribution of flowers to all mothers/
parents/grandparents*

or

Distribution of suitable Mothering Sunday cards to all present

Address *or* Presentation by children

Hymn

Acknowledgment of Sins

'Can a woman forget the infant at her breast,
or a mother the child of her womb?

But should even these forget,
I shall never forget you' says your God.

Isaiah 49: 15 NIV

or

The Lord is compassionate and gracious*;
he bends over his people as a mother bends over her child.
He abounds in love and faithfulness,
forgiving wickedness, sin and rebellion.

Based on Ex. 34: 6ff.

**the word "Gracious" in Hebrew only used of a mother.*

**O God, who nurtures us and our world
as a mother looks after her children,
hear us as we confess that we have fallen short
of what we ought to do:
we have rebelled against your commandments;
we have damaged or neglected those we look after;
we have not given respect and love to those who care for us.
We are sorry for all our sins
and for all that has gone wrong,
and we ask forgiveness, always remembering
that we must forgive those
who have sinned against us.
Amen.**

Forgiveness of Sins

May God the Father who cares for us as a mother,
forgive us all our sins;
May God the Son, our Lord and Brother Jesus,
guide us in our daily life;
May God the Holy Spirit, our enabler and comforter
lead us to walk in the way of the way of Christ, now and always.
Amen.

Our Future Hope

We can now go out rejoicing
that our past sins have been forgiven
and fallen away from us.
Let us remember that beyond this life
there is the other life
where we will be reunited with those we love
but no longer see,
and will enjoy the glory of a new creation.

or

We can now go out rejoicing
that our sins have been forgiven.
Let us remember that beyond this life
there is the other life in Jerusalem which is above,
where we shall be reunited with those we love
in the glory of a new creation.

Amen.

Reading

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven. I heard a loud voice proclaiming "Now at last God has his dwelling among mankind. He will wipe every tear from their eyes: there will be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain. There will be need of sun or moon for the glory of God will give it light.

Revelation 21: 21ff. NIV

Hymn Jerusalem the golden (HO&N 259)

Blessing

May the love of the Father fill our hearts;
May the love of the Lord Jesus fill our homes;
And may the grace of the Holy Spirit
bind us together in love
in our families and communities.
And may the blessing of God be with you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ.

Amen.

Hymn Onward, Christian families

Onward, Christian families,
Sing a happy song,
Lifting hearts and voices
As you march along.
Festal banners waving,
Young and old adore
Father, Son and Spirit,
God for evermore.

*Onward, Christian families,
Sing a happy song,
Lifting hearts and voices
As you march along.*

For that home at Nazareth

Hear our songs of praise:
For all those who shared in
Jesus' boyhood days.
Praise too for his manhood
When in Joseph's trade,
In his home and district
His full part he played.

Chorus

Onward, Christian pilgrims,
As through life you roam,
Sing a song of gladness
For a Christian home;
For the love that binds you,
For the things you share,
For laughter, tears and friendship
And the constant care.

Chorus

Onward, Christian families,
Sing a joyful song
For that greater family
To which we all belong.
Sprinkled with the water
In the threefold name,
Of the holy Church of Jesus
Membership we claim.

Chorus

Author unknown

Alternative Forgiveness of sins

May God, our Mother and Father,
forgive us for all our sins and confirm us
in our relationships with those we love.
May God the Son, our Lord and Brother Jesus,
guide us in all the actions of our daily life.
May God the Holy Spirit, our enabler and comforter,
give us the strength and power to walk in the way of Christ,
which leads to life, love and peace.

Amen.

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