

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 Mothering Sunday: John 19.25-27

## Welcome to Praying Safely Together but Separately

### THIS MOTHERING SUNDAY

The Church of England has encouraged a special day of prayer for our neighbourhoods and our nation. At 7pm this evening you may want to place a lighted candle in the window of your home.

More prayers and ideas can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>

### HOW TO USE THESE PRAYERS

If you are using these prayers to pray in a church building please maintain 3 meters of separation from others who may also be in the building at this time so that the risk of cross infection is kept to a minimum.

Please work through the prayers at your own pace. It may take you thirty minutes it may only take five. Please take your sheet home with you when you leave.

### A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MOTHERING SUNDAY

More information can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/stories-and-features/mothering-sunday-what-are-its-origins-church>

The Church of England keeps Mothering Sunday on the Fourth Sunday of Lent. When Christianity was established in Britain, the focus was a celebration of the Mother Church. Some time after the Norman Conquest, there grew up a practice of churches visiting the 'Mother Church' (this was usually a cathedral that had planted the parish church). This was probably for the purpose of presenting an offering at the Holy Table.

A popular notion is that Mothering Sunday was an occasion when, in the 18th and 19th centuries, domestic servants were given the day off to visit their mothers and the family home. What is far more likely is that the gathering of families on Mothering Sunday was due to the older custom of going together to the Mother Church.

Today Mothering Sunday is a special service when children and families are invited to church to give thanks for and to those who care for us, as well as the Mother Church.

For some this day is a difficult day: some mothers were absent for their children, some were/are not able to be a mother, or perhaps their mother's lives were cut short. So today is a day of mixed emotions: joy for some, and a day of remembering with sadness or pain for others.

## GATHERING BEFORE GOD

Make sure you are sitting comfortably.  
Breathe slowly and deeply.

I am in the presence of the Living God, Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and hold us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## REFLECTION

Make sure you are sitting comfortably.  
Breathe slowly and deeply.

Ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

## BIBLE READING: John 19. 25-27

<sup>25</sup> Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup> and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Read through the passage once. Read it quietly out loud, so only you can hear it, but say each word out loud.

Try and take note of any words or phrases that strike you.

Say that word or phrase quietly out loud or underline it with a pen.

Read the passage a second time.

As you read, think about how the word or phrase you notice might speak to you today.

After you have read the passage again, sit in silence and try and come up with a sentence or two that sums up what you think the word or phrase means for you today.

Read the passage a third time and prayerfully think about what Christ has said to you in this process.

### SOME THOUGHTS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

In our reading Jesus is dying. He is dying because he is nailed to a cross.

Why, at this painful moment right near the end of his life, is Jesus asking his mother to look after one of his disciples – one of his friends who have followed him around and shared his life for the last three years? And why is he asking this disciple to look after his mother? Shouldn't Jesus be more bothered about himself and his own situation?

The reason that Jesus does that is that he is passionate about family and relationships – Jesus wants people to be looked after and to look after one another. Today is Mothering Sunday, which, in a number of different ways is about family, our own and God's

Mothering Sunday is all about celebrating all who have acted like a mother to us. But that was not always what Mothering Sunday was about. It began as a tradition where people would go and visit the mother church that nurtured them and give thanks for the help and support that they had provided. Often this would be a large local church, which had supported or nurtured other

churches, sometimes it was a cathedral, or sometimes the place where they were christened, or married.

Think about that church for you. Thank God for it.

The point of visiting the mother church in this way was to show your appreciation to the ministry of the church, and so one of the traditions of this day would be what was known as 'clipping'. The congregation would form a circle by holding hands, around the church building, and embrace the church.

Of course the church that they wanted to give thanks for was not the building.

You are the church. The people are the church. We are discovering that now more than ever.

At this time we can't hold hands because we want to 'flatten the curve' of the rate of those being infected by the coronavirus. We have to do this to give the NHS the best chance of coping as we can.

This is a dark time in human history, just as in our Bible reading it was a dark time for Jesus too.

After he died, the Bible tells us that Christ descended to the dead, and Christ is always descending and re-descending to the dark places. That means that Christ is with us however dark it gets. There is always hope. There might be some hard work, but there is hope.

May we know that Christ is always descending and re-descending to the dark places. May we know that we are children of God. May we know God as the best Parent we can have, and may we know that we have Jesus as our Saviour. Amen.

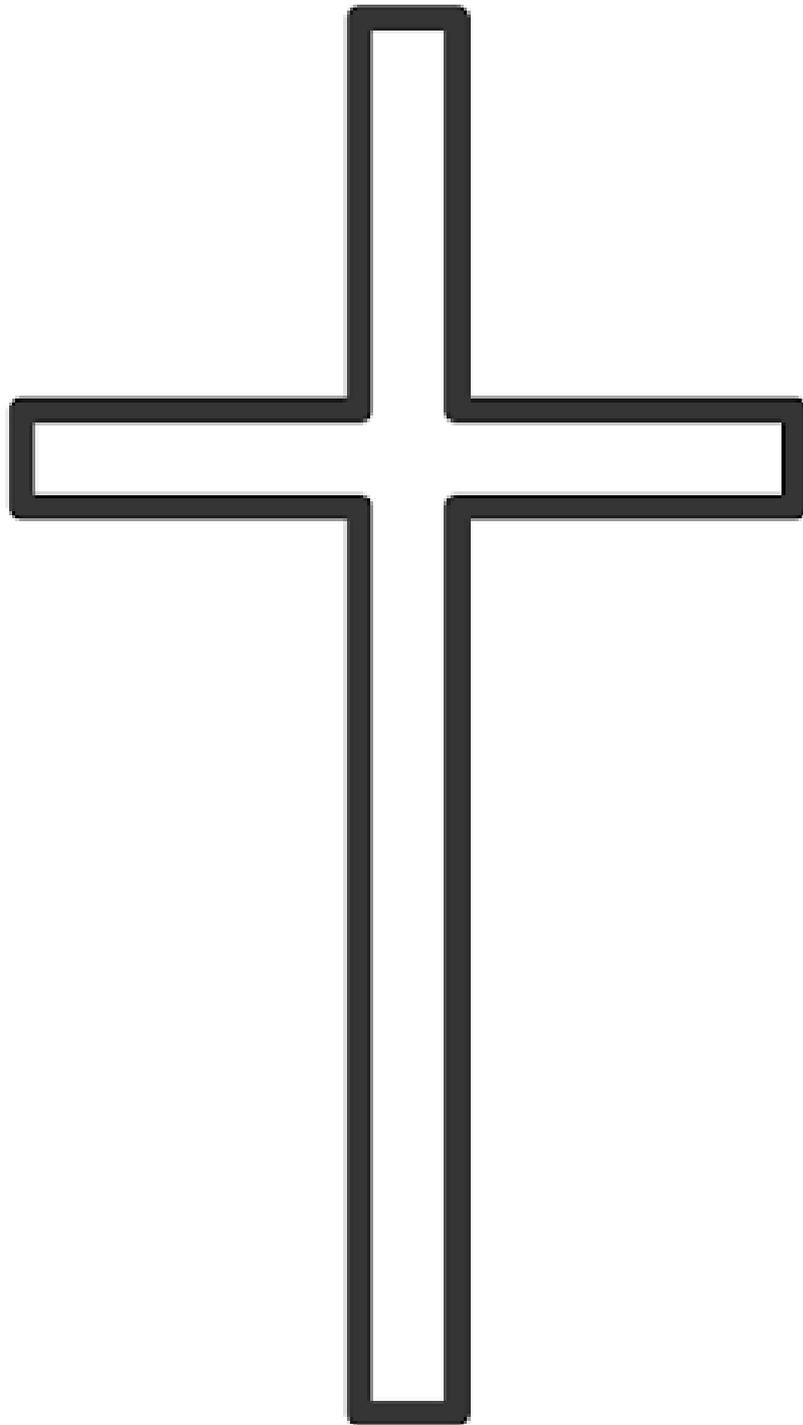
*These thoughts were adapted from a sermon by Harry Steele*

## PRAYERS

*Below is a simple outline of a cross. At the top of the cross write a name for God that means something to you, for example, 'Compassionate God', 'Caring God', 'Loving God'.*

*On the cross bar, write down a name(s) of anyone you would like God to take care of, perhaps someone who is ill, your mum/carer, maybe even a country which is in difficulty.*

*Finally at the bottom of the cross write a hope you have for those closest to you in the time ahead.*



*When you are finished, if you like you can pray the following words quietly.*

*These prayers were adapted from those by the Children's Society at [https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/u278/mothering-sunday-complete-set-a\\_0.pdf](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/u278/mothering-sunday-complete-set-a_0.pdf)*

As brothers and sisters in God's family,  
we ask our heavenly Father.  
to listen to the needs of his children, as we pray.

Loving God, we thank you for all mothers,  
for all they do, or once did,  
for all they give,  
or once gave,  
and for all they mean and will always mean.  
Grant us always-thankful hearts.  
Lord in your Mercy:  
Hear our Prayer

We pray for all families;  
for mothers or fathers struggling to  
bring up children alone,  
for families under strain,  
for parents whose children have died,  
or who are separated from them.  
Lord in your Mercy:  
Hear our Prayer

We give thanks for people in our lives  
who have encouraged us,  
changing our lives in often small  
but important ways.  
May God lead us to help others,  
so that we may see peace and justice across the world.  
Lord in your Mercy:  
Hear our Prayer

We pray for all those who mourn the loss of their mothers,  
may they find comfort in happy memories,  
enjoy in the promise of eternal life and happiness.  
Lord in your Mercy:

Hear our Prayer

We give thanks for the Church that holds us in a mothers love like Mary holding Christ at his birth and at his death.

We pray for all who seek to share the love of God, may the joy of God be felt this day.

Lord in your Mercy:

Hear our Prayer

*These prayers were written by Paul Davies*

## A PRAYER CONCERNING THE CORONAVIRUS

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious,  
be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

*From the Church of England website*

## AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus,  
I believe that You  
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.  
I love You above all things,  
and I desire to receive You into my soul.  
Since I cannot at this moment  
receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You  
were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit  
me to be separated from You.  
Amen.

*Taken from <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/act-of-spiritual-communion-339>*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into  
temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the  
power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.