

Worship at Home – 30th March 2025 (4th Sunday in Lent)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Mary Armstrong.

Introduction

Greetings and blessings on this Mothering Sunday, a tradition dating from the Middle Ages, when people returned to their "mother church", the church where they were baptised, which became a time for families to reunite. Over time, it evolved into a day when children, especially young women working as domestic servants, were given a day off to visit their mothers. Celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent, it was also once known as Refreshment Sunday, when Lenten fasting was relaxed midway through Lent.

Today is the day when we remember our mothers, and those who have been like mothers to us.

Today is a day when some people are proud, happy, recognised, supported, some are pained, grieved, uncertain...

Perhaps this day stirs up special memories of a mother (or mother-figure) who is no longer with us, perhaps somebody who died some time ago.

Today is also a day when we think about God as a Mother, about the female qualities of God. Often, we talk about God as Father, but God is so much bigger than our idea of gender, and there is enough of God for us to think of the divine mother too. God is not just male, but also female, and so much more!

Call to worship

Loving God, you father us
and mother us all our days.
Even before we acknowledged you
you loved us,
in the secret places of our lives
you nourish us,
offering us all that we need
to grow as human beings.

No matter how often
we desert you
you never turn your face away from us,
and your concern
is always for our good.

You weep for us,
you laugh with us,
you rejoice in our successes
and are saddened by our pain.

Yours are the arms
reaching out to cradle us
in our final moments.

Loving, mothering God,
strong and tender, tried and true,
we worship you today.

Opening prayers

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you as we celebrate Mothering Sunday; a chance to express thankfulness and joy as we remember our own mothers or those who mothered us throughout our lives. For all who have held us and fed us, cared for us and comforted us, challenged and encouraged us, we give thanks.

We also remember and pray for those whose experience of being mothered was not a good one, and for whom today will be difficult because of hurt, grief and even anger. We ask that your unfailing love will surround them and that they will feel your presence in their lives. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 594 – Lord Jesus Christ Patrick Robert Norman Appleford (1925-2018)

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| 1 Lord Jesus Christ,
You have come to us,
You are one with us,
Mary's Son;
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,
Pouring your love and goodness in;
Jesus, our love for you we sing,
Living Lord. | 2 Lord Jesus Christ,
Now and every day
Teach us how to pray,
Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance, Lord, of you;
Into our lives your power breaks
through,
Living Lord. |
| 3 Lord Jesus Christ,
You have come to us,
Born as one of us,
Mary's Son;
Led out to die on Calvary,
Risen from death to set us free,
Living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord. | 4 Lord Jesus Christ,
We would come to you,
Live our lives for you,
Son of God.
All your commands we know are true,
Your many gifts will make us new,
Into our lives your power breaks
through,
Living Lord |

A prayer of confession

Reconciling God,
forgive us when we make wrong choices,
when our decisions are not of honesty and integrity.
Forgive us when we hurt others by our words and actions.
Forgive us when relationships break down and we do not want to repair them.
Forgive us when we don't strive for peace.
Reconciling God, we choose life – life in all its fullness in you. **Amen**

Assurance of forgiveness

Lord Jesus Christ,
thank you that in you we have new life,
We choose life today through the cross,
We are healed and restored,
We are reconciled with one another in you,
We thank you that we are forgiven
and can again live in love and peace with all. **Amen**

A prayer of thanksgiving

God my Father and God my Mother,
God the Creator of all,

Thank you for the many women who have inspired us in our lives. We now bring these women to mind and also offer our thanksgiving for them.

We thank you for mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, carers, friends, teachers, leaders, entrepreneurs and scientists – the list is endless - and the many other women who contribute positively to our lives.

We ask that you will bless them, be near them and strengthen them as they fulfil the potential you have given them.

In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

Bible reading – Exodus 2:1-10

Moses Is Born

2 A man and a woman from the tribe of Levi got married. **2** She became pregnant and had a son by her husband. She saw that her baby was a fine child. And she hid him for three months. **3** After that, she couldn't hide him any longer. So, she got a basket made out of the stems of tall grass. She coated the basket with tar. She placed the child in the basket. Then she put it in the tall grass that grew along the bank of the Nile River. **4** The child's sister wasn't very far away. She wanted to see what would happen to him.

5 Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile River to take a bath. Her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket in the tall grass. So, she sent her female slave to get it. **6** When she opened it, Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby. He was crying. She felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

7 Then his sister spoke to Pharaoh's daughter. She asked, "Do you want me to go and get one of the Hebrew women? She could breast-feed the baby for you."

8 "Yes. Go," she answered. So, the girl went and got the baby's mother. **9** Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and feed him for me. I'll pay you." So, the woman took the baby and fed him. **10** When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter. And he became her son. She named him Moses. She said, "I pulled him out of the water."

Reflection on the reading

In desperate times mothers may fear for their children's safety. Moses' mother clearly feared for the life of her new baby and contrived a clever plan to ensure his survival. There were three women involved in rescuing him: first, his mother who used her intelligence and skill to hide the baby and who was rewarded with the care of him at least until his weaning (maybe at around five years old); secondly, the Egyptian princess who had compassion on the child that she found; and thirdly, his sister who stood at a distance to watch and who came forward bravely with her proposal. Now, as always, children need care from different people. Biological parents are very important, but others need to take on their roles and responsibilities as well to bring up a child successfully.

The story has an obvious application for people who care for children who are not their own – those who have adopted or fostered (like the princess) or who have taken on the care of their grandchildren or nephews and nieces. This could include childminders, nursery workers, and school staff, who often take the child through their early experiences of learning to walk and talk and witness their first words. A close bond is formed between them and the child and their

contribution is obviously very valuable. Their love and nurturing are clearly an important part of the child's development.

As we know, parenting has always taken many and diverse forms. There are fathers who stay at home while the mother works, grandparents who become parents again to their children's children because of difficult circumstances or because the parents must work. There are also many who have taken on their new partner's children because of marriage breakdown and a second relationship. God looks with love and respect, at those who, despite all kinds of difficulties, care for and nurture children in such circumstances.

Thinking again about Moses, a hero of the Old Testament, who rescued the people of Israel from enslavement and oppression in Egypt and led them out towards the Promised Land, his life starts with he himself needing to be rescued. His life was in danger through the ethnic cleansing policy of the Egyptians who felt themselves threatened by the growing population of the Hebrew underclass. At this most crucial and pivotal point in the Israelites' history, the great leader Moses depended on the sharp-witted and decisive actions of three people - three women – three mother-figures even - who rescued him from imminent danger, but whose names have not been recorded.

Hymn – STF 119 – God of Eve and God of Mary Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

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| 1 | God of Eve and God of Mary,
God of love and mother-earth,
thank you for the ones who with us
shared their life and gave us birth. | 2 | As you came to earth in Jesus,
so you come to us today;
you are present in the caring
that prepares us for life's way. |
| 3 | Thank you that the Church, our Mother,
gives us bread and fills our cup,
and the comfort of the Spirit
warms our hearts and lifts us up. | 4 | Thank you for belonging, shelter,
bonds of friendship, ties of blood,
and for those who have no children,
yet are parents under God. |
| | 5 | | God of Eve and God of Mary,
Christ our brother, human Son,
Spirit, caring like a Mother,
take our love and make us one! |

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

As children of a loving God who always listens to our cries, let us pray together. Loving God, you have given us the right to be called children of God. Help us to show your love in our homes that they may be places of love, security and truth.

God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, Jesus, your Son, was born into the family of Mary and Joseph; bless all parents and all who care for children; strengthen those families living under stress and may your love be known where no human love is found.

God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for all those who work with children and families. We pray for voluntary sector organisations, community groups, social workers, teachers, health visitors and others, who help and support families living in our community.

God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we thank you for the family of the Church. We pray that all may find in her their true home; that the lonely, the marginalized, the rejected may be welcomed and loved. On this day we

pray especially for all those who long to be parents, for those who must work away from their children and those who have suffered the pain of losing their child.

God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we praise you, for all mothers who have loved and laughed and laboured as they cared for their children. We praise you, for Jesus, born of a woman and nurtured in her love.

God of love, **hear our prayer. Amen**

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

Hymn – STF 611 – Brother, sister, let me serve you Richard Gillard (born 1953)

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| 1 | Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too. | 2 | We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load. |
| 3 | I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear. | 4 | I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through. |
| 5 | When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony. | 6 | Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too. |

Blessing

May the blessing of our parent God be with us,
as we love and care for one another.

And as we share Christ's unconditional love,
in the name of God, the Creator, Redeemer and Spirit. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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