*Mother’s Union celebration of Mothering Sunday 2021*

On Mothering Sunday, many of us thank God for the women who have had the greatest impact on our lives and celebrate their unconditional love and sacrifice.

For others, however, Mothering Sunday brings mixed emotions, and it can take real tenacity and trust in the Holy Spirit to give love and to feel loved.

So, in this service we remember before God families of all kinds, as they navigate the joys and challenges of family life and ask for his blessing upon them.

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,*

*that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* *1 John 3:1*

We draw near in worship to our heavenly Father, with full and thankful hearts, that we belong to his family and are all equally loved by him. Amen

Hymn 517

**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.  
  
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.**

**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.  
  
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.**

**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.  
  
Won’t you let me be your servant,**

**let me be as Christ to you?**

**Pray that I may have the grace to**

**let you be my servant too.**

*Richard Gillard (b. 1953)*

Prayer of Penitence

We have not always worshiped our God,

Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy**.

We have not always followed Christ our Saviour,

Christ have Mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

We have not always trusted in the Spirit our Guide. Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

Through the Cross of Christ, may God have mercy on you, pardon you, and set you free.

Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

May God strengthen you in all goodness,

and keep you in life eternal. **Amen.**

Wherever we are, we live in God's family.

When our families are broken by circumstance and pain, he reaches out to hold us in his arms, piece by piece he makes us whole again, and in his love-filled hands we are transformed.

So, Lord, help us to build relationships in all the corners of our hearts. To be like you, to love like you,

to heal brokenness and restore wholeness in families worldwide. **Amen**

Collect of Mothering Sunday

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 our Lord. **Amen**

Genesis 16:7-13

**7**The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. **8**And he said, “Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.” **9**The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her.” **10**The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.” **11**And the angel of the Lord said to her,

“Now you have conceived and shall bear a son;  
    you shall call him Ishmael,   
    for the Lord has given heed to your affliction.  
**12**He shall be a wild ass of a man,  
with his hand against everyone,  
    and everyone’s hand against him;  
and he shall live at odds with all his kin.”

**13**So she named the Lord who spoke to her, “You are El-roi” for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?”

This is the Word of the Lord.  **Thanks be to God.**

CANTICLE THE SONG OF OUR ADOPTION *Ephesians 1. 3-6*

1 Blessèd are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**you have blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.**

2 Even before the world was made you chose us to be yours in Christ:

**that we should be holy and blameless in your sight.**

3 In love you destined us for adoption as your children through Christ Jesus:

**such was your pleasure and your purpose,**

4 to the praise of your glorious grace:

**which you have freely given us in your beloved Son.**

**Ephesians 3:14-19 (GNT)**

I fall on my knees before the Father, **15**from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. **16**I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, **17**and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, **18**so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. **19**Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.

That is what Simeon said about Jesus. His message surprised Mary and Joseph very much.

This is the word of the Lord.  **Thanks be to God.**

Address

Creed

Let us affirm our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Prayers of Intercession

We thank God for giving us others to share in our lives: for parents, and the love which brought us to birth:  we praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

For mothers who have cherished and nurtured us:

We praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

For fathers who have loved and supported us,

We praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

For brothers and sisters with whom we have shared our home:  We praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

For children and their parents:

We praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

For other relatives and friends, who have been with us in our hopes and joys and times of sadness:  We praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

For all who first spoke to us of Jesus, and have drawn is into the family of our Father in heaven:  We praise you, O Lord;

**and bring you thanks today.**

A litany for biblical mothers

Eve, mother of humanity; teach us true wisdom, that all life is precious in God’s sight.

Sarah, Hannah, and Elizabeth, yearning for a child, comfort and strengthen all who know the pain of infertility.

Hagar, condemned to the harshness of exile, sustain those who struggle to feed their sons and daughters.

Rebecca, bride from a far-off land, welcome those who must bring up their families among strangers.

Rachel, weeping for your children, weep with all mothers whose children have disappeared.

Jochebed, mother of Moses and Miriam, lend your ingenuity to women who seek protection for their children.

Naomi and ruth, bound together by a love greater than blood, show us how bitter disappointment can become sweetness of hope.

Mary, daughter of Israel, mother of Jesus, share with us God’s secrets you have pondered in your heart.

*(from New start worship resources for the Millennium, book 2.)*

Jesus Lord of Life, by the power of your word and through your actions and love, call us to be your disciples. Give us strength to be different, to stand up for justice and peace and be signs of your reconciling love for all.

God of grace, enable your servants to carry out your mission on earth through the work of mother’s Union worldwide. Today we pray for Port Elizabeth in South Africa, West Ankole in Uganda, Nomadic Mission and Ekiti-Kwara in Nigeria, Worcester in England and the Episcopal Church of the Philippines.

Mothers Union Prayer

Loving Lord,

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world.  
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.  
Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.  
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Gathering all our prayers and praises into one we pray.

**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.**

Hymn 322

**I bind unto myself today**

**the strong name of the Trinity,**

**by invocation of the same,**

**the Three in One and One in Three.**

**I bind this day to me for ever,**

**the pow’r of faith, Christ’s incarnation,**

**his baptism in the Jordan river,**

**his death on cross for my salvation;**

**his bursting from the spiced tomb,**

**his riding up the heav’nly way,**

**his coming at the day of doom,**

**I bind unto myself today.**

**Christ be with me, Christ within me,**

**Christ behind me, Christ before me,**

**Christ beside me, Christ to win me,**

**Christ to comfort and restore me.**

**Christ beneath me, Christ above me,**

**Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,**

**Christ in hearts of all that love me,**

**Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.**

**I bind unto myself the name,**

**the strong name of the Trinity,**

**by invocation of the same,**

**the Three in One and One in Three;**

**of whom all nature hath creation,**

**eternal Father, Spirit, Word.**

**Praise to the Lord of my salvation:**

**salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen.**

*Attrib. Patrick (C390-461) tr. Cecil Frances (Fanny) Alexander (1819-95)*

Prayer of dedication

**Lord, let us be a witness to you:  
may we be immersed in scripture, constant in prayer,  
joyful in worship, generous in giving.  
A loving, supportive community reaching out to those in need especially in those times of loneliness and pain. We offer our prayer in Jesus' name, Amen**.

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

Celebrant Rev Ruth O’Kelly

Preacher June Butler

Readers Elizabeth Redding

Ruth Mooney

Sylvia Wheatly