

Sunday 27th March 2022

The Fourth Sunday of Lent



Gospel reading: Luke 15. 1-3, 11b-32

This reading is the well-known story usually called the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Some people prefer to call it the Parable of the Forgiving Father. Perhaps this is a good way of thinking about it on Mothering Sunday, when we celebrate caring by both women and men.

If we think of Mothering Sunday as simply "Mothers' Day" we miss a great deal of the meaning of this special day. Its origins lie in the fact that the fourth Sunday in Lent was seen as a day for a bit of a break from Lenten fasting! "Refreshment Sunday", as it is still sometimes called, gave people a chance to rest from the disciplines of Lent and to spend time with their families. As the years went by, for young people who had left home to enter domestic service, this Sunday became a chance for a day off to visit their family home and to worship with their families in their "mother church" – the church in which they had grown up.

Often, employers would send girls home with a cake for their mothers (the origin of simnel cake) and the girls would gather a posy of wild flowers on their way. So we can see how this developed into the modern idea of "Mothers' Day" with cards, gifts and flowers for mums!

What we shouldn't lose sight of, in the commercialism that surrounds 21st century Mothers' Day, is the fact that we celebrate not only the love and care given by human

mothers and those who have any kind of mothering role, but that we also remember the mothering role of the Church.

Jesus told this parable to show the love that God has for his children, even when they turn away from him. The father in the story runs to meet the son who has wronged him, so delighted to have him home, just as God welcomes each of us who turns back to him. We can be sure of his love and forgiveness.

As we celebrate Mothering Sunday, we are reminded that mothering is not only about the care of biological mothers for their children, but is also about the way in which fathers nurture their children and the way in which we can all "mother" one another, whether mothers, fathers, or not. This is the role model provided by Jesus and by his Church, especially important at this time, when we seek to rebuild communities following the isolation during the pandemic and look at ways in which we can welcome refugees.

A challenge to us all this Mothering Sunday could be to determine to help build communities in which everybody counts; communities which show compassionate love and care for one another, and in which everyone is nurtured and helped to be the best they can be; communities in which each and every member is listened to and treated with respect and kindness. Wouldn't that truly be kingdom-building!

God says,  'As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you'  Isaiah 66.13



Mothering Sunday Alphabet Challenge



Can you come up with a Mothering Sunday
themed word for each letter of the alphabet?

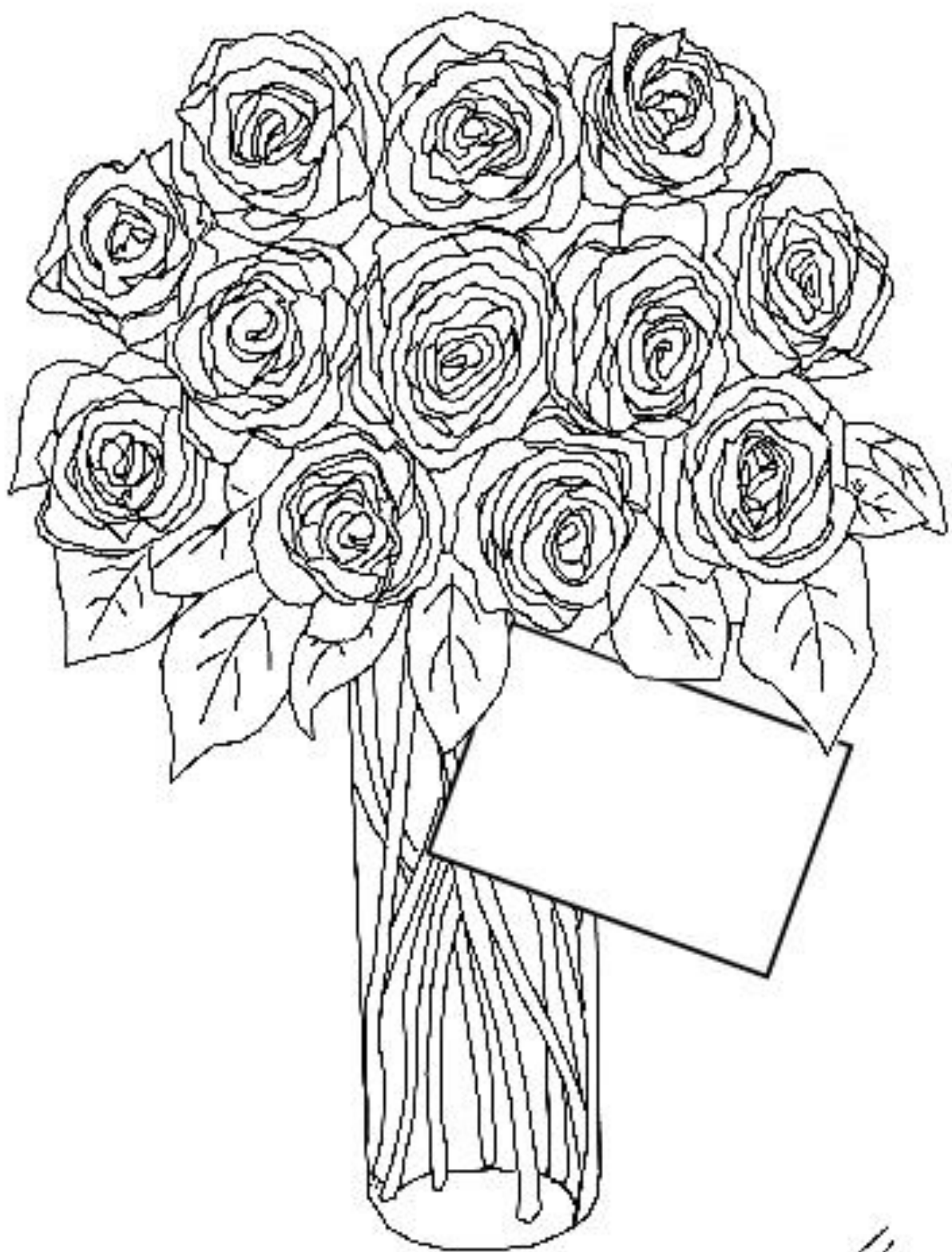
A	_____	N	_____
B	_____	O	_____
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M	_____	Z	_____

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