

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024

# The Fourth Sunday of Lent



Today's Gospel reading: Luke 2:33-35

**The child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'**

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

Today's gospel reading takes us back a few weeks to Candlemas, when we thought about Mary and Joseph taking their baby, Jesus, to the Temple for Presentation. They met the elderly man, Simeon, who had been waiting to see God's Messias before he died. His words to Mary highlight the suffering she will go through with Jesus when he is older. Today, on Mothering Sunday, we think not only about Mary's care for Jesus as a baby, but also her love and concern for her adult son, as he went about his ministry and then was put to death.

The significance of Mothering Sunday is shown by the care Mary gave to Jesus throughout his life. Mothers care for their children of all ages. However, mothering is not only about the care of biological mothers for their children but is also about the way in which we can all "mother" one another, whether mothers (or even female!) or not. This is the role model provided by Jesus and by his Church and continues to be especially important at this time, when we need to rebuild communities following the isolation during the pandemic and to heal the intolerance and fractured relationships we see all around us.

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!



A prayer for this week:

Mothering God, we thank you for all your love and care for us. May we, in all our relationships, reflect that love and respect and nurture everyone with whom we come into contact. Amen.





# Mothering Sunday Alphabet Challenge



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

A	_____	N	_____
B	_____	O	_____
C	_____	P	_____
D	_____	Q	_____
E	_____	R	_____
F	_____	S	_____
G	_____	T	_____
H	_____	U	_____
I	_____	V	_____
J	_____	W	_____
K	_____	X	_____
L	_____	Y	_____
M	_____	Z	_____





JT.