

**Mears Ashby and Hardwick
and Sywell with Overstone**



**Prayers and Reflections
for personal use**

**Sunday 22 March 2020
Mothering Sunday**

Welcome to the first of the Prayers and Reflections for personal use at home or in the peace and quiet of one of our churches.

Each Sunday and in Holy Week, whilst the Covid-19 restrictions continue, a Prayers and Reflections resource will be published on the benefice website: www.mearsashbygroup.org.uk. Copies will also be available in our churches on Sunday mornings. Sharing in the same thoughts and prayers is just one of the ways that we can remain connected with our churches and villages. We are - and will always be - God's beloved family in this place.

In this first edition, we are giving thanks to God for our mums and, also, for all who have played mother-like roles in our lives. For some, this is a day filled with love, joy and happiness as we celebrate with our mums. For others, it will be one of reflective love as we recall with affection our mums who are no longer with us. For some, it can be filled with sorrow for the child we have lost or never been able to conceive.

I hope that the Prayers and Reflections will meet you where you are, and also help you to pray for the mums who may be struggling in these exceptional times.

God bless you and your families.

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MOTHERING SUNDAY

PREPARING OURSELVES

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence,
and feel his love. If you are at home,
you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love,
here, in your room.*

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Pour out your love upon me,
make my heart beat in time with yours;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets,
with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them
to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening
words of this well-known hymn.*

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

Feel God's forgiveness. You are his beloved child, nothing can separate you from his love. May this thought inspire you in the week ahead to be loving and caring and calming.

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER (The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our loving Father.

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 sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Pause for a moment to think of your friends, who are saying this prayer today at home, or in church. Feel yourself united - at one - with them, and give thanks to God for their friendship and fellowship.

If you wish, write their names here:



LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Our first reading for today shows us a love-shaped life.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

This passage from the letter to the Colossians offers us such a beautiful image of love. It speaks of how love clothes us, makes us the people we are, how we appear to others.

*Take a moment to think about your mum,
or those who are your mum-like influences,
and how their love has shaped who you are.*

*And, if you are a mum or dad, godparent,
aunt or uncle, or grandparent, think about how your love,
and the way you live, is shaping the younger ones in your life.
How is God's love for you - his beloved one - shaping your life,
showing that you are clothed in love?*

A Prayer in Response

Loving God,
thank you for the gift of life and love,
for all those that I love,
and all those that love me.
Bless all my family,
as I tell you each name. *Say their names.*
In Jesus' name, I pray. **Amen.**

Our second reading speaks of the cost of being a mum.

And Jesus' 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 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.'

Being a mum is not always easy - right from a child's first breath, there are natural fears and worries, as well as hopes and dreams, and overwhelming love. And new mum Mary had more than her fair share of worries - thanks to Simeon's warning, 'A sword will pierce your own soul too.' I'm sure that she would have pondered these words in her heart as Jesus learnt to walk and talk, then write and carve.

It made me think about how there is no age-limit to being a mum, a time when you stop worrying about your children. Mary carried on worrying about Jesus when he left home, as a thirty-year old, to spread the good news of God's love and began to attract the attention of the authorities. She would have felt the sword coming closer and closer. And, as Simeon predicted, her heart was torn in two as she watched, helpless, at the foot of the cross. Mary's story reminds us that it isn't always easy being a mum; yet, it is a lifelong and rewarding vocation.

Take a moment to reflect on how the cost and joys of being a mum have been true in your own life. Give thanks to God for the gift of life and love, of mothering care, and for his mother-like care.



PRAYERS FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY

Here are some prayers for this Mothering Sunday. Feel free to use one or more of these prayers, and to add your own.

Loving God, I give you thanks for the great love you have for me
- for my family - for this village and for your troubled world.

Make me an agent of your love,
and a source of calm for those younger than me.

Lord of life and love - hear my prayer.

Loving God, I give you thanks for my mum,
and for everything she does, or once did, for me,
and all that she means to me.

I pray for those who have lost their mum,
or a child or to-be child, whose hearts are filled with pain,
this Mothering Sunday. Comfort them in their sadness,
help them to experience your love.

Lord of life and love - hear my prayer.

Loving God, I thank you for the gift of family life.
In these anxious times, I pray for all parents-to-be
waiting for the precious gift of new life.

And for those parents caring for their children
in countries that war-torn or facing famine. Keep them safe.

Lord of life and love - hear my prayer.

Loving God, I thank you for this church family and for village life.
Strengthen us in the coming days, bind us together,
and keep us as one, as we learn to live in more restrictive ways.
Help us to be there for the lonely and anxious,
the sick and self-isolating. Like you, my heart is bursting with
love for them.

Lord of life and love - hear my prayer.

Loving God, I thank you for all the carers in our village,
and for all who work in our NHS service and care homes,
keep them safe in these challenging times.

Help them to know that you are with each one of them,
blessing their loving service.

Lord of life and love - hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings.

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.**

Prayer of Blessing

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

Lord, bless and guide me,
whatever I do, whether at home or outside.

Go before me, watch over me,
and keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**