

# Readings and Reflection for 22 March 2020, Mothering Sunday

**Readings: 1 Samuel 20:20-28; Luke 2:33-35**

*This weeks reflection is by Revd Martin Winbolt-Lewis*

Students in an advanced Biology class were taking their mid-term exam. The last question was, "Name seven advantages of breastfeeding and/or breast milk."

One student, in particular, was hard-pressed to think of seven advantages. He wrote:

1. It is the perfect formula for the child.
2. It provides immunity against several diseases.
3. It is always the right temperature.
4. It is inexpensive.
5. It bonds the child to mother, and vice versa.
6. It is always available as needed.

And then the student was stuck. Finally, in desperation as his time was up, he wrote:

7. It comes in two attractive containers and it's high enough off the ground where the cat can't get it.

The theme of mothering is a temporary respite from Coronavirus, but not forgetting it. I am not a mother, I have no right to speak ... but still **Mothering** Sunday is a day of recognition; and a day of mixed emotions for many.

Our texts (1 Samuel 1: 20-28; Luke 2: 33-35) describe the **pain** of loving. Motherhood and vulnerability seem to go hand in hand. Hannah 'gives up' Samuel; Mary being told 'a sword will pierce her heart' over Jesus.

Some **reflections** for today. Are mothering gifts automatic? Do they only come with gender alone? Do they come with birthing mothers only? (foster mothers and adoptive mothers?) It's certainly something you can't prepare for. (shock horror! A baby; what do I do?) Do you have to be a perfect mother, or is 'good enough', good enough? My mother was great in some ways, but not in others!

Mothers are not the only ones with a "mother heart". The prophet Hosea describes the mother heart of **God** Hosea 11: 1-4 : "When Israel was a child, I

loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son ... I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them."

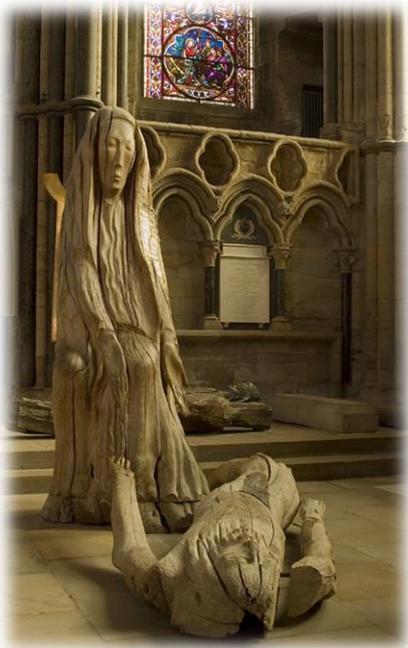
And in Matthew 23 v37 we read of **Jesus'** mother heart: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing". Jesus yearned to reach out, but it wasn't wanted.

What about single parent dads; they do their fair share of mothering too?

**So** Mothering Sunday tells us something about **gratitude** for our mums (when sincere), motherhood in all its forms. It tells about the **pain** inherent in any kind of loving. It reminds us that mothering gifts are not confined alone to those who have had children. Though having said that a mother's heart is something special, as we discover when she's gone from our lives.

Today too we focus afresh too on the **Mother heart of God**. It's always there even when we feel it absent. God enfolds us, not to possess us or control us but to set us free as good parenting does to find our true selves over the course of our lives. This love serves to reach outwards to others. It gives us

the security to live our lives in the faith that there is a **mother heart** at the centre of the universe. We are invited to rest there in silence and hope especially when the going gets tough, and our own compassion wears thin; as it does. Even in a time of Coronavirus!



*Mary and Jesus, 'the Pieta' at Durham Cathedral*