

Sunday 15 March 2026

Mothering Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Lent

Collect:

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

1 Samuel 1:20-28; Psalm 34:11-20; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:33-35

For Mothering Sunday our readings turn the spotlight on the tough, sacrificial side of being a mother. We begin with 1 Samuel opening a window onto the world of Hannah, who has previously been observed weeping in the shrine at Shiloh, petitioning God that she may bear a child. Promising her firstborn to God, she leaves, conceives, gives birth and now returns to make good on her words. Her years of pain at not having a child are turned to joy, but it is a joy meted out with enduring sorrow that she is going to have to leave him to the responsibility of a stranger. Yet her faithfulness to God and her trust hold true – notice how she states towards the end of this episode that she has ‘lent’ Samuel to God, hinting that the strength of her bond to her son is not diminished. Psalm 34 may well be a companion to Psalm 25, both being acrostic psalms, with each poetic line beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. Where Psalm 25 is a prayer for help, Psalm 34 offers thanksgiving combined with instructions to trust in God, especially during times of suffering.

In our second reading Paul is teaching the Colossian Christians the sacrificial disciplines required to live well in community, to move from an organisation to a family. Echoing the Psalm, he emphasises trust in God. Simeon’s prophecy to Mary in the Temple, where she has come to present her first born to the Lord, strongly recall Hannah’s gifting of Samuel at Shiloh. Both children are destined for specific, crucial roles as God’s messengers. Both mother’s sing songs glorifying God while declaring their confidence in God’s justice and salvation. Simeon’s words underscore Jesus’ destiny as God’s messenger while also preparing Mary for the cost that this will involve, pain that will not be confined to Jesus but will affect his whole family, especially his mother. The mothering that God requires of all of us is not an easy option, it makes us vulnerable, opens us up to rejection and tears, but also has the potential to bring great joy – for our loved ones, ourselves and our communities.

Loving God,
as a mother feeds her children at the breast
you feed us in the sacraments with the food and drink of eternal life:
help us who have tasted your goodness
to grow in grace within the household of faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

Passion Sunday, the Fifth Sunday of Lent