

## Sermon for Mothering Sunday, 22 March 2020

by Canon Dr Malcolm Grundy

**Your clergy, deacons and Readers send our thoughts, prayers and good wishes to the family of congregations who make up the worshipping community of the York City Centre Churches.**

With the other churches and denominations, we share the privilege of 'watching over' and praying about the life of our city – especially in these difficult times. When Jesus came to Jerusalem, he compared this 'watching over' to the way in which a mother hen guards and nurtures her chickens (Matthew 23:37). On this Mothering Sunday, we can thank God for the many types of mothering we have received and in which we share. All of this as a spiritual blessing has as its focus the way in which the Blessed Virgin Mary watched over her son, in joy and acclamation and in sorrow and desertion.

**Watching over as a mother protects and guards her children is a rich concept which runs throughout the Bible.** The Old Testament stories of Sarah, Ruth, Rachel and Leah, Rebecca, Hannah and Moses' mother and sister all reflect this. In the New Testament, the story of Jesus' birth and childhood, the nameless Syrophenician woman's refusal to take no for an answer, the devotion of Mary and Martha and the protective care given by Mary Magdalene each add to the list of characteristics associated with mothering. Biblical reflection on these characteristics of motherhood allows the list to grow ever longer and more diverse.

**Mothering is all those things, and more.** Without someone to look out for our interests, to defend us, to protect us; without someone to enable us to learn our purpose in life, without someone to model trust, faith, and joy; without someone who will love us enough to let us go our own way; without someone to take the risk of loving us, even knowing that that love may bring them pain; without someone to stand with us in our times of greatest suffering – without someone to do those things for us, we are missing something crucial.

We might also think about our own lives – our experiences of mothering or of being mothered, remembering with thanksgiving the people who have done those things for us. And perhaps we might also think of times when we have been failed by those who were supposed to care for us, or those times when we ourselves have failed. **And if we ourselves have nobody for whom we can do these things, life is somehow incomplete.**

If mothering were only done by mothers, it would be very hard indeed to ensure that everyone received the nurturing, the protection, the love, the sacrifice, the guidance and more that we need to become the people we are meant to be. **As a church community, we are called into a role of mothering** that sometimes might need to be just as desperate, fierce, loyal, grieving etc as the mothers in today's readings. If we, as a church, truly love the community in which we are situated, just as God loves it, and if we are to be God's holy people for God's needy world, then we will feel the pain of the world's suffering, and we will be willing to sacrifice something of ourselves in order to bring to birth God's purposes for the world.

On the cross, God's love is nailed firmly to the world so as never to let it go – is our love for the world so firmly fixed as this? Are we this passionate about nurturing the world into becoming the place that God created it to be? **A truly parental love is one that would give anything and everything for the child. This is the love of God that we see on the cross, but this is also the love that we are called to have for one another and for all of God's creation. When we love like that, we make our Mothering-God visible in the world.**

*I have put together these thoughts from the various sermon offerings and websites available. It is my hope that in this way we can be associated with all those around the world who are exploring similar themes and ideas as well as recalling memories on this Mothering Sunday. Malcolm Grundy*