

Prayers: Father in heaven, thank you for the example of Mary, who faced challenges and pain with courage and faith. Help us to do the same, in these difficult times, and to show sacrificial, motherly love to those around us whose needs may be greater than our own. We pray especially for:

Sick: Lolita Alvira, Inez Bennett, Janet Davis, Maureen Felton, Dawn Forey, Hanna Librato, Marion Mason and Ken Peters.

RIP: Alan Davter.

May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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**Matthew and Jonny are saying
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer
in the Chapel every day on a rota.**

St John's Church

Alternative Pew Sheet

22nd March 2020

Welcome!

Following Government advice, the Church of England has suspended worship for the time being. We have decided to publish an alternative pew sheet in order for us to keep in touch with everyone at St Johns and offer some resources available [here](#).

During this difficult time, if you need any help or assistance from Matthew or Jonny, please be in touch (see page four).

'The Lord is near.

**Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'**

Philippians 4:6-7

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love everyone we come across as we love ourselves.

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Mothering Sunday (The Fourth Sunday of Lent)

The Collect

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

Bible Readings:

[Colossians 3:12-17](#)

[Luke 2:33-35](#)

Reflection

Simeon told Mary some amazing things about her baby son, Jesus. We see in the Gospel Reading (Luke 2:33-35) that Mary also learns that her privileged position will not exempt her from the cost of motherhood.

Mary and Joseph had travelled to the Temple in Jerusalem to perform the ceremonies required after birth. Women were expected to offer a sacrifice for their purification. In addition, because Jesus was Mary's firstborn son, parents were required to present an offering of five shekels because such a child was believed to belong to God.

At the temple they came across a holy man called Simeon, who had been told by God that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that this child, Jesus, was the much-longed-for saviour. He approached the family and, holding baby Jesus in his arms, declared that this little one would be a blessing to both Jew and non-Jew alike. However, he had unwelcome news too, that not everyone would accept Jesus. He would divide opinion and Simeon recognised that this would have grave implications for his mother, who would suffer as a result, most tragically through her son's death.

But it was not just Jesus' crucifixion that would cause Mary to suffer. People often misunderstood her son and the crowds that surrounded

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him were not always supportive. In chapter [three](#) of Mark's Gospel, for instance, Jesus is declared to be "out of his mind". So anxious were Mary and the rest of her family over these words that they travelled to find Jesus "to restrain him". This suggests that Mary did not always comprehend what her son was doing, something which must have caused her great anxiety as it would any parent.

No wonder then, that Simeon uses such emotive language to explain the pain that motherhood will bring Mary. The Greek word for sword used here describes a long, large blade and the "soul" was understood to represent the centre of emotions and feelings. This brings to life Luke 2:35 which says "...a sword will pierce your own soul too." Simeon recognises that, despite knowing the joy and privilege of bringing such a wonderful baby into the world, Mary's experience of motherhood will also involve intense emotional pain.

Strange as it may seem, Simeon's words might offer reassurance to all parents who find their roles difficult that they are not alone. Parenthood is a sacrifice and a cost. Simeon acknowledged that motherhood can bring anxiety and stress. Parents fret over the children even when they are grown up and have left home. They suffer when their children are hurting, often more when they are in pain themselves. Simeon's emotive imagery of a piercing sword acknowledges that this sort of emotional pain can hurt as much as a deep, physical wound.

Simeon's empathy with Mary inspires us to pray for and support mothers (and all those who have the responsibility to care for and nurture the young). It is easy to judge and criticise people's parenting, but we should be people who offer encouragement and blessing to those with children.

But showing motherly love is not limited to those with children. On Mothering Sunday, we remember all those who have mothered us spiritually. Every individual in a church community will have been nurtured and supported by the hard work and sacrifice made by Christians before them. May we, too, show this same kind of motherly love and build up and encourage others in faith as we have received ourselves. Amen.