

TALK FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY AT BSJ:19 MARCH 2023

(based on Psalm 71: vv 5-9 &15-18)

Remembering to say thank you

During Lent, we've been reflecting on our skills and talents, and discerning ways in which we might improve or make better use of them. We are all of us both givers and receivers of such gifts as friendship, sympathy, or a helping hand. It seems to me that Mothering Sunday is the perfect time to show our gratefulness for the gift of motherly love, irrespective of who has given it to us during our lifetime. It is a gift given selflessly, a lifelong commitment to caring and indeed worrying, long after our children are grown up and independent.

When we're given a nicely wrapped present on special occasions, or are offered help in a particularly difficult situation, we always say thank you, don't we? Yet when the gift of love is a constant, it's all too easy to take it for granted, so thank goodness for Mothering Sunday! I chose Psalm 71 as today's reading because it seems to encapsulate so much of what motherly love is. It is written in gratitude to God, an appreciation of his parent-like and steadfast love. It brings to mind the sort of commitment that we may be able to identify with, describing aspects of a constancy that perhaps we ourselves have experienced, as givers and/or receivers of that gift. The word 'refuge' at the very start conveys a sense of safety and protection, a thread that runs through the whole passage. "From my birth I have leaned on you", says the psalmist. That is what children do, isn't it - put their trust in their parents, needing boundaries, guidance, and an example to follow. He acknowledges his lifelong gratitude: "From my youth you have taught me", he says, adding, "and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds". And that thankfulness is repeated: "my praise is continually of you". Hmmm, how often do we actually sing our mothers' praises, or acknowledge

their patience and unstinting love? We may barely notice, when it's there all the time,.....

There are words in the Psalm that triggered further reflection on motherhood from the perspective of an older person. "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.....even to old age and grey hairs, do not forsake me". These could be ascribed to a grandparent who fears growing old and being forgotten. Some will be giving back that love by taking care of those who once took care of them - and others will be remembering mums, step-mums and grannies who are not with us here today, giving thanks in our hearts.

Often it is not until we become adults with responsibilities of our own that we look back and truly appreciate that gift of parental love. Today, we all of us have the opportunity to think and be thankful, children and adults alike, for a gift with no wrapping or fanfare, one that is given freely and with total dedication. It's a day for showing gratitude to those who devoted their love to us, and for treating them to something special - and tomorrow, no doubt, normal service will be resumed!

Just going back to the Psalm, I find it comforting that, regardless of what stage of life we have reached, the one thing we can be sure of is the love and devotion of God. And so we give our thanks to him too today, for being always there for us and for the generations to come.

In the name of Christ, amen.

