**Talk 1: Whose Mother?**

We have several drawings and pictures of mothers. Can we identify them?

What do they have in common? Look different, but perhaps share in the same qualities.

Whose Mum is this? – Virgin Mary, Pharaoh’s daughter, St Peter’s, Man outside Mosque.

What are these qualities? – children to offer a word to describe Mums – record on flipchart.

Qualities that we all should aspire to.

Going to hear some more about this that after our readings…

**Talk 2: Spreading motherly love**

Our two readings are really tales of adoption. In the first reading from Exodus, we hear that famous story of Moses escaping the wrath of Pharaoh – how his mother, desperate to save him, places him in a basket and hides him on the Nile in the hope that someone would take pity on the child. The person who finds him is the Pharaoh’s daughter and, as we heard, even though he was not an Egyptian, she felt sorry for the baby and provided for him.

And in our Gospel reading, we are at the foot of the cross where Jesus instructs his Mother Mary and John, one of the disciples, to adopt each other. “Here is your mother”, “here is your son”, he says to the two of them, revealing that the role of mother and receiving a mother is not based just on blood.

Today is a day when we celebrate all sorts of interpretations of motherhood (and, in particular, the qualities that we see behind us on the board). Motherly love doesn’t have a particular face or personality type. It isn’t exclusive and it doesn’t put up barriers or boundaries - it loves wherever there is need and it loves without limit.

We see this very clearly in the person of Jesus, who reached out to those in need whatever their circumstances or preferences or race or creed or gender. He just sees the person and responds in love, even on the cross when there was nothing he could have gained for himself.

Motherly love doesn’t let pride or logic or profit margins get in the way of giving – it is a sacrificial love and just overflows with giving. It doesn’t preoccupy itself with winning and it isn’t interested in power. It isn’t calibrated towards preserving itself, but rather towards serving others. This sort of love sets us all an example and it is one that our world seems to be desperately in need of today.

We are, indeed, living in troubled times where standards and behaviour are often anything but motherly. Increasingly, our attitudes reflect a binary view of the world, seeing everything as black and white and leaving little room for grey areas.

We’re either remain or leave, left or right, believers or non-believers, saved or lost. We are struggling with our identity and, as such, look for ever more definite ways to define what we are and what we are not. This can lead to a lack of sympathy for those whom we do not count among our number and an unwillingness to act when the stranger cries out in need.

The result of this has been an increase in hate crime, attacks on minority groups, venomous exchanges over local and national political issues and faith groups narrowing their doctrine, such that relationships with the wider community can become hard to establish. And such an exclusive outlook even extends to how we view the planet - with concern for future generations, for communities on the other side of the world and for endangered species hard to locate - as we drag our feet and fail to respond to the emergency of climate change. The earth is crying out and we are guilty of neglect.

So, what can we do to bring more “motherly love” into our world? Well, we can really make an effort to do all we can to promote a spirit of care and inclusion around our church and in our neighbourhoods. As a church we are looking at many different ways to build on our eco church status and join in with its mission statement:

*Eco Church’s vision is to create a vast network of churches across England and Wales as local centres of creation care in the community – shining beacons of hope for a brighter environmental future.*

And as a church committed to reaching out in love to all people, I think we can do even more to present ourselves as a truly inclusive church. Some of you will know that there is an Inclusive Church network and I am very eager for us to join it. This will be something we discuss at PCC, but it really amounts to us being able to agree with the following statement:

*We believe in inclusive Church - church which does not discriminate, on any level, on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality. We believe in Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.*

This is a statement of motherly love – reaching out to all, not just to those who are like us. We can commit to this together as a church and in how we approach those around us each day, each doing our own little bit to build up a story of love and care for all in our communities. A very famous Mother is quoted in our thoughts for the week, making it clear that it really doesn’t take much for each of us to play our part…

*Smile at each other, smile at your wife, smile at your husband, smile at your children, smile at each other -- it doesn't matter who it is -- and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other*. --Mother Teresa

Let us pray…