Mother’s Day Sermon March 27th 2022

**Prayer**: Father, take my words and speak through them; take our ears and hear through them; take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you.

(Happy Mother’s Day everyone!)

Traditionally, Mothering Sunday had nothing to do with mothers at all; it was about returning to your mother church, on the fourth Sunday of Lent, where you were baptised or nurtured in faith. It was about reconnecting with the roots of your faith, God’s everlasting love and your identity in Christ. But that got lost somewhere along the way and it morphed into Mother’s Day. Which of course is all about love.

For some of us, it’s a happy day but for others, it can also be a day of very mixed emotions.

In today’s short gospel reading, we meet Jesus and his mother Mary, at the foot of the cross; a picture of perfect love and heart-breaking grief. Jesus said that there is no greater love than laying down your life for your friends, and that is exactly what He did for us.

Motherhood and parenting in all of their many guises, are not always easy.

Some of **my** happiest childhood memories relate to Mother’s Day and the smile on my mom’s face when she read the handmade cards my brothers and sisters made for her and the sound of her laughing when she realised the bunch of flowers we proudly gave her came from the local park.

All 5 of us tried to be on our best behaviour that day but we probably failed in our endeavours long before bedtime. We are very lucky to have those memories and I really hope everyone here, and everyone watching this at home, has happy family memories to look back on and that you can also look forward to making many more in the future.

Sadly, that won’t be possible for everyone because for all sorts of reasons, not all mother and child relationships are loving, stable and happy. Parenting and being parented, is complex.

**Slide 2 (Candles)**

That’s why writing a sermon for Mother’s Day can be tricky; because whilst for many of us it’s an opportunity to write cards, give flowers and to share hugs, a day to thank God for our parents and children, PAUSE even though we may sometimes have a robust exchange of views on everything from bedtimes to politics… it’s also a day of sadness for a lot of people.

Some of us may be grieving for the children we weren’t able to have and for the ones who died before we were ready to let them go.

We might be mourning the mothers we have lost too soon or simply don’t see anymore.

And who can fail to have been moved by the pictures and stories of families torn apart in the conflict in Ukraine in recent weeks…parents making desperate decisions to protect their children and mothers giving birth in hospital cellars? Children bewildered by tanks and bombs that are destroying everything they have ever known?

Underpinning all of this is the sure knowledge that God is holding us close and loving us through all of it, even when we might not see Him.

Maybe today, when we thank God for our own blessings, we can also remember all of them too and say an extra prayer, and perhaps light an extra candle, for those who are finding today difficult?

When God created us in His image, He blessed us with His absolute love and set us free to love Him and each other and to create our own families.

According to Paul, all we have to do is put on a coat of God’s love, compassion and forgiveness, never taking it off, and sharing it with everyone we meet.

Jesus’s mother was with him at all of the important moments of his life, from his birth and as we heard earlier, at his death. When she and Joseph presented him at the temple, Simeon had warned Mary that a sword would pierce her heart. But she could never have expected anything like this… she had always been able to kiss his grazed knees and soothe his worries away. But not today. All she could do was be there with him until they lifted his broken body down to her outstretched arms. In the final moments before his death, his thoughts were of her, making sure that she would be looked after by his disciple when he could no longer be there for her.

In that moment of letting go, Jesus showed the depth of his love for his mother.

And God Himself showed us how much he loved us when He let His only Son die for our redemption.

Apparently, Forest Gump’s mother told him that ‘Life is like a box of chocolates…you never know what you’re going to get!

When Terry and I blended our families several years ago none of us knew quite what to expect but happily, after a few ‘love conquers all’ moments, we are very happy with our box of chocolates.

We have 3 children between us that we love to the moon and back. We may be their parents, but they have been shaped by many others who have guided them through their lives. This morning I want to share just one of them with you.

This is Siobhan, who lives in Leeds with her very spoiled dog, Dylan.

It took years of loss, temperature charts and data collection before she finally arrived the week before Christmas, 30 something years ago.

I fell in love with her instantly. Those blue eyes pierced my very soul. They still do. Her first word was ‘Mom’ and it was me who held out my hands to her as she took her first independent steps. We’ve had all the usual mother-daughter ups and downs of course, but we survived!

Every parent knows that at some point, they have to let their children. We hold them close for as long as we can, sharing their joys, lows and everything in between, but letting them do what they need to do shows how deep our love for them is.

Last year Siobhan decided to do something very special and very brave even though she knew it carried some risk. And for me it means letting her go; again.

Although I am beyond proud of her, I am also terrified for her because on April 12th she will be donating a kidney to my brother, her uncle and god father, who is in end stage renal failure. She is offering him the gift of life.

So, I will take her to the hospital in two weeks time and wait, channelling my inner Mary until I get the call telling me she is out of surgery and back on the ward. I’ll be praying and crying and wishing it was me rather than her.

I will let her go, but Terry and I will then spend the next few weeks holding her close and looking after her and Dylan for as long as she can put up with us. I hope she is ready for some SMOTHER LOVE.

Mothering Sunday, Mother’s Day is all about Love. Jesus told us to love one another, so wherever you are, and whoever you are spending the rest of the day with, I hope you all find love.

Happy Mother’s Day.