

Saint Margaret of Antioch Leigh-on-Sea Mothering Sunday homily 2020 “like no other”

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**Blessed are those who trust in the Lord ... They shall be like a tree
planted by water ... in the year of drought it is not anxious. Jeremiah 17**

The history of Mothering Sunday is a long one in this land. For a thousand years it has been a day of travel and pilgrimage. Yet this one will be like no other and we will all surely remember it to the end of our days. Before now:

- For a thousand years - journeying to the mother church the cathedral, priory or minster to give thanks for the life of the church universal,
- For a thousand years – journeying to our earthly mothers or those who have cared and nurtured us and acted as mothers and say thank you. Servants and workers were traditionally given time off to do so. Perhaps some would visit graves and places of rest lay flowers and even eat food.
- For a thousand years spiritually journeying with our Lady, Mary Mother of Christ given to all Christians as a mother from the cross to pray for us and nurture us by example.

Today for **most**, physical journeys will be replaced by virtual and electronic ones. And yet, if we can keep the spiritual journeying, we will find it may be like no other - but in the way Christ truly intended.

The dreadful disease that has come to us from a far land, reminds us we have mistreated Gods creation, our Mother Earth, once again. There are always consequences. The consequences of this pandemic will be heartfelt and long lasting and we must pray; life style changing for humanity. The consequences will also take us to a place where many millions of the world already live daily - on the edge: because of poverty, preventable disease, hunger and war.

Normally, we can change channel or turn the page. Not now. It is a fearful place and yet the spiritual journey of Mothering Sunday tells us it need not be without hope, that there is a way to lighten the darkness and that the dawn will come.

We have, as you know, four schools in our parish and like all of our institutions businesses and people, life is very changed. One of my many school visits in this last week of being fully open, was West Leigh Junior. It was my last physical assembly there for a while. Exams, school places and plans aside some were so looking forward to their production of Mary Poppins at Belfairs Academy which is also in our parish. I too was eager to see it for I have loved it since I was their age.

One of our younger members was due to sing and not any old song but one of the very best – **feed the birds**. You know the one; the old bird lady struggling to make a living selling crumbs for the birds on the steps of St.Paul’s cathedral in London for tuppence tuppence a bag. You’ll be pleased I’m not going to sing but it is the most beautiful lament with shards of hope piercing the darkness in the lyrics.

<p>Early each day to the steps of Saint Paul's The little old bird woman comes In her own special way to the people She calls, "Come, buy my bags full of crumbs"</p>	<p>"Feed the birds, tuppence a bag Tuppence, tuppence, tuppence a bag Feed the birds", that's what she cries While overhead, her birds fill the skies</p>
<p>"Come feed the little birds, show them you care And you'll be glad if you do Their young ones are hungry, their nests are so bare All it takes is tuppence from you</p>	<p>All around the cathedral, the saints and apostles Look down as she sells her wares Although you can't see it, you know they are smiling Each time someone shows that he cares...</p>

Outside our church is a placard – “***open for business though not in the normal way***” it includes the aphorism that “***hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up***” – this summarises the Church’s call to prayer and action.

Everyone can contribute something to the effort – even the normally housebound and infirm – and receive something in so doing. As long as you have a phone, as long as you can offer a prayer, as long as you can ***look beyond the self*** you have something to offer and receive in so doing.

Our Lord looks down from the agony of the cross crucified and dying. He looks down ***beyond himself*** and creates a new family. At the foot of the cross is his mother Mary and the beloved disciple

‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’

It is hope in prayer and action at the darkest of hours. The will of God in Christ is that we really should be one family, a family that doesn’t export disease, war, poverty and division but love and hope. The coming weeks and months will test whether we can hear Christ’s call from the cross and live – really live – not just in this life but in the life to come where the apostles and saints look down and smile when we heed that call and “show them we care”.

Do this and perhaps we will understand the true and lasting meaning of ***Mothering Sunday*** rather than just a date in the calendar called “mothers day”. Think on this when you light your candle at 7 tonight.

