

## Sunday 22 March

Dear Friend

As I write this, St Matthew's church is open for those who would like to be there to say a prayer, light a candle, or just be still in God's presence on this strangest of all Mothering Sundays. Mothering Sunday was traditionally a day for those in service to return home - just one weekend in the year - to their mother church and to their family. In those far off days travel was extremely limited to those who could afford it and for those who had the time to devote to it. Those in service might travel with their masters and mistresses but for them it was work, never for leisure. For most people leisure was a luxury that only the wealthy could afford. So as we are also limited in our ability to move around, let's spare a thought for our antecedents, for whom this was just normal life - although they weren't forced to practice social distancing!

Mothering Sunday is a difficult day for many people, and for me personally, as the first Mothering Sunday since losing my own mother, most of the day so far I have spent looking at the world through a veil of tears. Feelings of grief can overwhelm us from time to time, in fact feelings in general have the capacity to paralyse us or cause us to act entirely out of character.

The following is a technique that has been shared with me, that is designed to help us become bigger than our feelings; I hope you may find it as helpful as I have.

Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and just notice any sensations you have - your body against the chair, your feet on the floor, and then try and notice how you are feeling. Is there are a part of you that is particularly associated with those feelings? It could be in your stomach, or a tightening of the chest. Then say these words out loud:

"A part of me is feeling.... (Worried, sad, fearful or whatever)"

After a few moments of being conscious of these feelings say this - again aloud:

"A part of me is feeling.... and I'm saying 'hello' to it"

Let some more time pass as you hold those words in your mind, then place your hands gently on the place where you are experiencing these feelings and say the following:

"A part of me is feeling.... and I'm saying 'hello' to it; and no wonder!"

The truth is that feelings just are, there is no right or wrong about feelings. Too often we say to ourselves "I shouldn't be feeling like this", but in reality we cannot help the way we feel and if we try and suppress our emotions, all sorts of problems can result. So this technique is designed to help us become bigger than our feelings, so instead of saying "I feel sad", which sounds like every part of us is caught up in sadness, this way of responding to our sadness enables us to put our feelings into a bigger context and hopefully be able to deal with them in such a way that they no longer threaten to overwhelm us. Try it and see!

Back to Mothering Sunday: Whatever our experience of our mothers, even if we find it impossible to truly give thanks for them, may we remember that the love of God is as tender-hearted as the best mothers' love, and even if we have been forsaken, rejected or otherwise harmed by those who should have nurtured, loved and protected us, our wonderful God has a heart full of love for each one of us - for you, as a unique person whom he formed in your mother's womb, and whom he brought into this world and who has been with you from the moment of your conception right up to this present moment. His desire is to nurture, love and protect you - all you have to do is to allow him to!

This is what God says to each of us: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

*Isaiah 49.15-16a*



This, of course, takes us straight to the cross.

A joke for today:



Beans:

A teacher asked her pupils to use the word "beans" in a sentence. One little girl said: "My father grows beans." "My mother cooks beans" said a boy. A third child said: "We are all human beans!"

May you know the nurturing, loving, and protecting presence of God to be with you on this and every day, as you rejoice to be a human bean!

With every blessing

Simon