

Abridged and adapted for use at home

Opening words & lighting the chalice

(If you have a candle at home you may want to light it)

Friends draw close.

Listen together. Sing together, Pray together.

Share the mysteries which never die, and the silences that never cease.

And as we share and celebrate and worship, one in all, and all in each,

may we feel and know that we are being understood better

than we know and understand ourselves.

May we give to the winds our fears.

May we give to the world our faith.

May we give to Life our thanks and our service,

for evermore.

(Benjamin Dowling)

Introductory thoughts:

Today we have the opportunity to reflect on our mothers or primary care-givers - to think about and remember them silently in the peace of this safe space. There will be happy memories, and sad ones, but I hope we'll be able to honour who they are, or were.

These words are from the famous song by Dolly Parton: 'Coat of Many Colours'

(Some of you may know that she was from a very large family, who were very poor)

'Back through the years I go wanderin' once again,

Back to the seasons of my youth.

I recall a box of rags that someone gave us,

And how my momma put the rags to use.

There were rags of many colours,

But every piece was small,

And I didn't have a coat,

And it was way down in the fall.

Momma sewed the rags together,
Sewin' every piece with love -
She made my coat of many colours
That I was so proud of.

As she sewed, she told a story
From The Bible, she had read,
About a coat of many colours
Joseph wore and then she said:

Perhaps this coat will bring you
Good luck and happiness,"
And I just couldn't wait to wear it,
And momma blessed it with a kiss.

My coat of many colours
That my momma made for me
Made only from rags
But I wore it so proudly....'

If you have access to a computer or smart phone you can listen to this song at:

[youhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1zJzr-kWsl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1zJzr-kWsl)

Questions for reflection: Did you have a rag bag at home when you were a child?
Did your mother make your clothes?

Thoughts 1: Making a home.

My mum was a great homemaker. I remember particularly as a young child that she used to clean out and lay the fire in the sitting room - no central heating then - every day, before she cooked a full English breakfast for us. I remember the labour of the washing, and watching the mangle being used from a prescribed safe distance.

In the days before toddler groups and nurseries in their modern guise existed, it was she who organised a few neighbouring mums to look after each other's children once a week, so that every mother had a morning to herself.

She stitched us little books from offcuts of paper that our father had access to to write and draw in and made all our clothes. I wonder if these recollections chime with memories you have of your early years. Sometimes our memories may be of advice or encouragement.

Abigail Wortman, recalls the start of infant school as 'Two Simple Words':

'On the first day of first grade, I stood by the front door with butterflies in my stomach.

I voiced my biggest concern to my mother: "How will I make friends?"

Crouching in front of me, she handed me advice I carry with me to this day:

"Be Switzerland." Be friends with everyone. Treat everyone equally and fairly."

For all of my 20 years, I have lived by these words.

Soon I will graduate and become a part of the real world. And on that first day, nervously facing new responsibilities, I know I will whisper two words to myself: "*Be Switzerland.*" '

My mother stayed home with us for several years, but most mums today have a greater challenge of juggling work and homemaking. And sometimes in the 21st century we mock the love of homemaking that many women share. (Some men too, of course.)

Part of homemaking is to do with the practicalities of living, working out what a family needs, or what it can manage with. Part of it is the following of customs, part artistic expression. Making a bright, calm, uplifting environment. Homemaking at its core, though, is the expression of love through the effort that goes into it, and the making of a place where we feel safe and supported to be ourselves. The making by our mothers of somewhere that can become ours, to which we belong.

Remembering our mothers: a time of commemoration:

'Now I recall my childhood when the sun

Burst to my bedside with the day's surprise:

Faith in the marvellous bloomed anew each dawn

Flowers bursting fresh within my heart each day.

Looking upon the world with simple joy,
On insects, birds, and beasts, and common weeds,
The grass and clouds had fullest wealth of awe;
My mother's voice gave meaning to the stars.' *Andrew Freeman*

.....
'Here is a thing my heart wishes the world had more of:
I heard it in the air of one night when I listened
To a mother singing softly to a child restless and angry
in the darkness.' *'Home' by Carl Sandberg (1878 – 1967)*

I invite you now, to look at a photo of you mother if you have one to hand, and / or light a candle for her (or other carer who has mothered you.)

Reflect on what she gave you, in the silence of your heart for a few moments **PAUSE**

Now a time of prayer and meditation:

A prayer of St Teresa of Avila from the 16th Century:

Nothing distress you, nothing affright you,
Everything passes, God will abide.
Patient endeavour accomplishes all things:
Who God possesses needs naught beside.

Lift your mind upward, fair are his mansions,
nothing distress you, cast fear away.
Follow Christ freely, his love will light you,
Nothing affright you, in the dark way.

Let us pray now for the troubles of our world:

Let us pray for those who are ill and vulnerable,
for those who have succumbed to the corona virus infection, and those who fear it.

We pray for courage to support each other with generosity, and for all the doctors,
medical experts and politicians who are trying to protect us.

Let us pray for those whose working lives are upturned by the fall-out of dealing with such a pandemic.

We pray for patience, understanding and fortitude in the face of adversity, and that those of us who are fortunate will hold out our hands to those who are struggling.

Let us pray for those in areas of the world where the natural world continues to be ravaged, and for those who are coping with the consequences of bush fires or floods or other natural disasters.

We pray for courage to change the ways in which we use and abuse the earth, and for the courage to address the causes of global warming in whatever ways are available to us.

Let us pray for those who are powerless or imprisoned in corrupt political systems, or whose lives are undermined by the consequences of extreme capitalism.

We pray for the courage and determination to make what interventions we can to contribute to the changing of these systems.

Let us be one world, one family, mutually compassionate and supportive, as we are a small world here, sharing love and understanding and faith. AMEN

Hymn: from Sing your Faith: 179 'Touch the Earth Lightly'

If you have a purple hymn book at home, you may like to sing this. Or if you have access to a computer or smartphone you can listen / sing along to a recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-js8Ko2qU1I>

Touch the earth lightly
Use the earth gently
Nourish the life of the world in our care
Gift of great wonder
Ours to surrender
Trust for the children tomorrow will bear

We who endanger
Who create hunger
Agents of death for all creatures that live
We who would foster
Clouds of disaster
God of our planet forestall and forgive

Let there be greening
Birth from the burning
Water that blesses and air that is sweet
Health in God's garden
Hope in God's children
Regeneration that peace will complete

God of all living
God of all loving
God of the seedling the snow and the sun
Teach us deflect us
Christ reconnect us
Using us gently and making us one

Shirley Erena Murray b. 1931

Now let us remember our mothers (or other care giver), who may have showed us how to care about such things, in a time of meditation:

It may help to concentrate on a particular image or memory you have of your mother.
You might want to shut your eyes – or focus on the photo, or candle you have lit.

Here, safe and loved within the wider community of our Meadow family,

Let us breathe calmly, and know:

What our mother (or care-giver) gave of themselves to us.

Here, safe and loved within the wider community of our Meadow family,

Let us breath calmly and know:

What they set aside to see to our needs.

Here, safe and loved within the wider community of our Meadow family,

Let us breath calmly and know:

How the tough love they employed was for our own good.

Here, safe and loved within the wider community of our Meadow family,

Let us breath calmly and know:

How their letting go of us was to launch us into our own lives.

Here, safe and loved within the wider community of our Meadow family,

Let us breath calmly and know:

How lucky we are to have or have had such a mother (or caregiver) whatever the mistakes they made.

Let us hold our mothers gently in our hearts....

PAUSE.... a few moments of silence

Thoughts 2: What is involved in being a mother/mothering?

What should mums do for their small children every day? Nancy Jergins lists these five things

- ❖ *To show physical affection*
- ❖ *To be fully present*
- ❖ *To be kind*
- ❖ *To use loving words*
- ❖ *To discipline calmly*
- ❖ *To laugh together*

Dr Henry Cloud & Dr John Townsend say that mothers need:

- ❖ To make their child feel safe. 'As little people, we experience the world as dangerous. Safety can only be found in the mother, or whoever is doing the mothering....'
- ❖ To nurture their child. 'Good mothers pour care into the souls of their children much like sunlight and water pour nutrients into a plant. Our souls flourish when we are being nurtured and cared for...'
- ❖ To establish trust. 'We must experience many instances of trustworthiness before we can truly trust others. Trust enables us to reach out, to depend, to need, and to see others as the source of good things.'

- ❖ Belonging and invitation. 'We all have a need to belong to someone and to something bigger than ourselves. Belonging and love are at the root of our humanness....' A mother can 'rescue us from alienation and isolation, and usher us into the world of relationship.'
- ❖ To be someone to love. 'A mother provides someone for the child to love – she is a good "object of love". Love fills us up, and colours our outlook on others and the world in which we live, so that we view life with hope and optimism.'

In practice, as we know it's never an easy job, especially as children grow older.

Reading: an extract from the novel 'Bridge of Clay' by Markus Zusak.

This is the extraordinary story of an ordinary family growing up in Sydney in the latter part of the 20th century: over this time, they experience a series of challenges and tragedies. In this extract, the 5 Dunbar boys are all fairly young children. The father is Michael, mother Penny, and boys Matthew - who is the narrator - Rory, Henry, Clay, Tommy

"In those days, too, I remind myself, our parents were something else. Sure, they fought sometimes, they argued. There was the odd suburban thunderbolt, but they were mostly those people who'd found each other; they were golden and bright-lit and funny.

Often they seemed in cahoots somehow, like jailbirds who wouldn't leave; they loved us, they liked us, and that was a pretty good trick. After all, take five boys, put them in one small house, and see what it looks and sounds like: it's a porridge of mess and fighting.

I remember things like mealtimes, and how sometimes it got too much: the forks dropping, the knives pointing, and all those boys' mouths eating.

There'd be arguing, elbowing, food all over the floor, food all over our clothes, and 'How did that piece of cereal end up there – on the wall?' until a night came when Rory sealed it; he spilt half his soup down his shirt.

Our mother didn't panic. She stood, cleaned up, and he would eat the rest of it shirtless – and our father got the idea. We were all still celebrating when he said it: 'You lot, too.'

For the whole summer, we ate like that, our T-shirts heaped near the toaster. To be fair, and our father's credit, from the second time onwards, he took his own shirt off with us. Tommy, who was still in that beautiful phase when kids speak totally unfiltered, shouted, "Hey! Hey, Dad! What are you doing here in just your nipples?"

In that sense, there was always a bulkiness to us. A bursting at the seams. Whatever we did, there was more: More washing, more cleaning, more eating, more dishes, more arguing, more fighting, and throwing and hitting and farting, and 'Hey, Rory, I think you better go to the toilet!', and of course, a lot more denying. It wasn't me should have been printed on all our T-shirts; we said it dozens of times each day.

It didn't matter how in control or on-top-of-things things were, there was chaos a heartbeat away. We could be skinny and constantly agile, but there was never quite room for all of it – so everything was done at once.

One part I remember clearly is how they used to cut our hair, a barber would have cost too much. It was set up in the kitchen – an assembly line, and two chairs – and we'd sit, first Rory and me, then Henry and Clay. Then, when it came to Tommy's turn, Michael would cut Tommy's, to give Penny a reprieve, and then she'd resume and cut his.

'Hold still!' said our father to Tommy. 'Hold still,' said Penny to Michael.

Our hair lay in lumps in the kitchen."

You may like to now think about:

The things your mum – or dad (or caregiver) – was/ is particularly good at.

The things they found difficult but struggled to overcome.

What did/do they teach you/ leave with you, as you grow older? **PAUSE**

Our mothers teach us such a lot of things, either overtly by example, or instruction, of more subtly by their other life choices.

The following poems demonstrate how mothers are role models and pass on life skills – which may be something we took for granted when we were younger:

In the first sonnet, Lola Ridge, who lived between 1873 and 1941, speaks of her mother helping her daughter to see beauty in the world, and in herself:

Your love was like moonlight
turning harsh things to beauty,
so that little wry souls
reflecting each other obliquely
as in cracked mirrors . . .
beheld in your luminous spirit
their own reflection,
transfigured as in a shining stream,
and loved you for what they are not.

You are less an image in my mind
than a luster
I see you in gleams
pale as star-light on a gray wall . . .
evanescent as the reflection of a white swan
shimmering in broken water.

Among Christina Rossetti's collection of sonnets, she writes of her mother teaching her how to love:

Sonnets are full of love, and this my tome
Has many sonnets: so here now shall be
One sonnet more, a love sonnet, from me
To her whose heart is my heart's quiet home,
To my first Love, my Mother, on whose knee
I learnt love-lore that is not troublesome;
Whose service is my special dignity,
And she my loadstar while I go and come
And so because you love me, and because
I love you, Mother, I have woven a wreath
Of rhymes wherewith to crown your honoured name:

In you not fourscore years can dim the flame
Of love, whose blessed glow transcends the laws
Of time and change and mortal life and death.

Today we have reflected on what our mothers mean to us, remembering them, honouring them....in gratitude for all they do, or have done. We have recalled all they have taught us.

Let us appreciate a little the immensity of the task mothers have and the wholeheartedness of their generosity in attempting it. It is not a task you can 'get right', but for those of us who are lucky, our mums gave it their best shot.

Hymn: from 'Sing your Faith' 145 - Sleep, My Child

If you have a hymn book you may like to sing this. If you have access to a computer or smartphone you can listen to the original version of this Welsh song at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW2aBxujzB4> -

Sleep, my child and peace attend you
all through the night
I who love you shall be near you
all through the night
Soft the drowsy hours are creeping
hill and vale in slumber sleeping
I my loving vigil keeping
all through the night

Mother, I can feel you near me
all through the night
Father, I know you can hear me
all through the night
and when I am your age nearly
still I will remember clearly
how you sang and held me dearly
all through the night

While the moon her watch is keeping
all through the night
while one-half the world is sleeping
all through the night
Even while the sun comes stealing
visions of the day revealing
breathes a pure and holy feeling
all through the night

adapted by Alicia S. Carpenter b.1930.

Final words

Remembering what our mothers taught us, as well as what our God requires of us,
May the deeds we do with our hands,
and the words we speak with our lips,
and the thoughts we think with our minds,
and the things we feel in our hearts,
be at all times worthy of the divine spark within us.

A Sanskrit affirmation:

Look to this day –
For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the verities
and realities of your existence:
the bliss of growth,
the glory of action, the splendour of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream
and tomorrow is only a vision,
but today well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore to this day.

Thank-you for sharing today's Meadow journey with me from afar - honouring our mothers together. They would be the first to say: "Go well – Stay well." Amen.