

Symbolic action – Giving of gifts

People are invited to come up to the altar or central space with symbols listed below and say the words following:

basket *'she took a papyrus basket ... and put it among the reeds'* Exodus 2:3
We recall the basket of reeds with which Jocebed surrounded her son Moses; we see in it a symbol of the mother love with which we have been surrounded, and with which we surround those in our care.

water *'put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch'* Luke 5:4
We remember the waters of the Sea of Galilee, the backdrop to the life of Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons; we see in them the 'deep waters' of motherhood, the journey of trust in God's loving action in our lives and in the lives of those in our care; we give thanks for the 'catch', the flourishing of those we care for, the love and joy they bring into our lives.

sword/knife *'and a sword will pierce your own heart also'* Luke 2:35
We have the courage to contemplate these words of Simeon to Mary the mother of Jesus when she presented Him at the temple; we allow ourselves to feel the heartbreak of our mothering, the failure, rejection, exhaustion and shattered dreams, knowing that these too are an essential part of the journey and mystery of mother love.

We say together – Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord,
We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name. Amen

Final Blessing

Journeying God,
You have a great adventure mapped out for us.
And we want to travel with you.
Help us to shake off the past,
to take on the future and go forward with you.
We will not fear the heights, for you will steady us.
We will not fear the rough places, for you will equip us.
We will not fear the valleys, for you will sustain us.
With you we go forward,
and we trust you to bring us home. Amen

Put out into the Deep

A Mothers' Union Service for Mothering Sunday

The Gathering

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Deep within your soul
there is a knowing place
a sanctuary where gifts are nurtured.
Enter that sacred space.
Spend time there tending your gifts.
There in the chapel of your heart
you will become a gift to be given. *Macrina Wiederkehr*

Introduction

We come here today to spend time with each other and with God in remembering and celebrating the gift and work of motherhood, wherever it is found.

We will hear about Jocebed, the mother of Moses, who entrusted her son to the deep waters of God's mercy when she placed him in the basket of reeds on the Nile.

We will hear about Salome, wife of Zebedee the fisherman, mother of James and John the apostles. Zebedee put out into the deep waters of the Sea of Galilee to catch fish; Salome put out into the deep waters of her faith and spirituality when she chose to walk with her sons alongside the unknown Jesus.

In contemplating what we know of their lives, we will explore what they teach us about the life and love of motherhood.

We remember that, whether or not we are mothers ourselves, together we are the village that is needed to raise the child.

Collect – invite four people to light a candle each saying the following words:

As we light this first candle:
We pause to remember with gratitude all those who have truly mothered us throughout our lives.

As we light the second candle:
We give thanks for the gift of mothering, nurturing, deep within us,
and pray for the grace to let its flame burn bright.

As we light our third candle:

We pray for all those whom we are called to mother, for the courage to love deeply, and to let go freely.

With our fourth candle:

We ask for forgiveness for the times when our hearts have been closed to the love, and need for love, of those in our care.

Readings

First Reading: Exodus 2:1-10 – The Birth of Moses

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

This is the Word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Matthew 20:20-28 – The request of James and John

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons. She bowed down in front of him to ask him for a favour. He asked her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Promise that in your kingdom these two sons of mine will sit on your right and on your left." Jesus replied, "You don't realise what you're asking. Can you drink from the cup that I'm going to drink from?"

They told him, "We can."

He said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup. But it's not up to me to grant you a seat at my right hand or at my left. These positions have already been prepared for others by my Father."

When the ten heard this, they became furious with the two brothers. But Jesus called the disciples and said, "You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them and their superiors act like tyrants over them. That's not the way it should be among you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant,

and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That's the way it is with the Son of Man. He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people."

This is the Word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Sermon or Meditation

Profession of Faith

I believe in God, the Father the Almighty,
the Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
whence He shall come
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen

Intercessions – *members are invited to lead their own intercessions*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen

