

Reflection for 15th March (Mothering Sunday)

Mothering Sunday incorporates the idea of the mother church, together with the celebration of our own mothers and the mothering we receive, and have received, from them – and it also leads us to ponder the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the gospel story. Mary plays an important part in the story, and Mothering Sunday is surely an appropriate occasion to think about her. As we do so, one of the things we notice in the gospels is that, at so many times and in so many places, *Mary was there*.

Of course, Mary was there from the very beginning of the story of Jesus. When God was seen in human form, she was the one who had been chosen to enable him to become flesh and live among us. Soon afterwards, she was there in the temple, when the old man Simeon recognised her baby for who he was, and gave her the awesome and terrifying prophecy of his future destiny.

Mary was there at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. When the wine ran out, she was the one who said “Do whatever he tells you” – which is surely a message the world needs to hear! And Mary was there at the cross, alongside some of Jesus’ friends. As we read in one of today’s gospel readings, she was entrusted to the care of the beloved disciple with the words “Woman, here is your son”, and to the disciple “Here is your mother.” At the cross the one who gave him birth was united with those who would make him flesh for the next generation.

Finally, Mary was there at the beginning of the Church. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the very first thing the disciples did when they went back to Jerusalem after the Ascension was to go to the upper room, where they all, as Luke puts it, “were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.”

The Church is a community, not simply a collection of individuals: a community charged with the greatest of all responsibilities, that of making God known in the world. By ourselves we are no-one, but as part of the community of the Church we are part of something much greater. And within that community, which brings healing to broken bodies and disturbed minds, which brings forgiveness to those who know they have done wrong, and which lifts the words of scripture off the page to become a living reality in the experience of the men, women and children of our day, we all have a role – we each have a part to play.

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