

Reflection for Mothering Sunday

By Revd Sue Strutt

These last 12 months have been very difficult for everyone. There has been change of pace, a change in the way we work, and practically no play. We have also had to manage the usual ups and downs of life in spite of the national situation. A street interview heard on Radio 4 about how people feel coming out of lockdown and seeing the end of restrictions revealed stories of hardship and pain.

There was the woman whose husband is badly disabled and her brother has severe mental health problems, constantly on the phone to her. A man whose wife caught Covid from her father who was in a care home and has since died; fortunately she is recovering. A young woman with a young family struggling to make ends meet. Others outlined their lives in isolation, and so on.

St Paul in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians talks about consolation after suffering: "Just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also is our consolation is abundant through Christ". So, how do we find this consolation? How can we offer it to others?

There are clues in the other readings for today. The Gospel, especially, shows the suffering of Jesus and we can only imagine what his mother was feeling. But Jesus, as always points to love as the consolation – the disciple he loved was also at the foot of the cross, no doubt feeling despair and pain on the cruel way his friend was being put to death. Jesus told the two he loved the most to look to each other as mother and son, finding comfort in loving and caring.

Hannah's story in the First Book of Samuel also brought the pain of parting. She had longed for a child and had to put up with mockery from other women because she remained childless for so long. Hannah bargained with Eli, the man of God, that if he prayed for her to conceive a male child and God answered the prayer, she would hand him over to be brought up by Eli in the full knowledge and way of God. That became reality and so we have Samuel, but Hannah knew he would be cared for and above all loved, so she was able to leave the future of her son in God's hands.

Love is the key to all consolation. What is love? St John, writing in his first letter, tells us "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them". *1 John 4:16b*

So, this day of all days in the Church's year is about love – not romantic love, we have St Valentine for that – but loving those around us, showing appreciation for all the kindnesses shown to us and, perhaps, finding more capacity to love those we find difficult. We think, also, of those who have nurtured us through life, mothers, fathers, teachers, family, and friends. Nurturing is not just about childhood, we continue to need it throughout our lives.

The people interviewed of whom I spoke at the beginning were not complaining of their lot, just stating facts. They all looked towards the future with hope. Whether they profess a faith or not, it is clear God is sustaining them. God is, indeed, within them and around them.

Let us all, from our Mother Church, reach out in love and prayer to all who suffer today. And you to all those who have made our lives a little better over this last year by their love for us.

MY love to you all, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sue