

## ***Sermon for Online Service: Pott Shrigley 26 April 2020***

*Luke 2. 22-35. Mothering Sunday*

Think back to the start of 2020. Most of us, as we stood on the verge of a new year, were wondering, with a mixture of excitement and trepidation, what joys and sorrows, what nice – and nasty – surprises, the new year might hold. I suspect that very few of us expected that we would be celebrating Mothering Sunday isolated from our communities, from our everyday life and work, even from our friends, loved ones and church family.

In our reading we see Mary also on the verge of something new. She's in the temple with her new baby, Jesus, and right at the start of a new journey as a mother. And no doubt she too is full of both excitement and trepidation for what lies ahead. Well, if she isn't she soon will be, as in comes old man Simeon with a message from God. 'This child', he says, 'will bring light, hope and healing into our world'. Great! Exciting!! 'Oh, and sorrow, like a sharp sword, will pierce your heart, Mary.' Oh no! Hard times lie ahead, too.

And, of course, hard times did lie ahead for Jesus – and, with him, for Mary.

But anyone who is a mother, a parent, knows well that it brings both joy and pain. Although Mothering Sunday is a happy day – and this service one of celebration – it is also a painful day for many: for those who have lost a child, or a mother; for those who would have welcomed the experience of parenthood, but were never able to; for those conscious of having made mistakes, whether as parent or child.

Going back to the New Year; at that time I wrote in our Parish Magazine, HotPott:

*The New Year is a trip into the unknown and uncertain. Only one thing is certain about 2020; God is already there.*

And that brings us back to Mary, and to the 8-day old infant in her arms. Simeon's words bring home to her, yes, the reality that pain and sorrow would come her way: but those words also remind her that God has sent, in her son, hope, and a guarantee of God's presence with us at all times. She might even have thought back 9 months to the angel's words: 'You will call him Emmanuel,' he said. 'God with us'.

Mothering Sunday is not just about flowers and chocs: which is just as well, when we can't even meet up to hand them over! It's about a God who is not just 'God up there', but who came down to us as a baby; born of a mother, just like us. 'God with us'.

That God *is* with us. At all times. Even now. Especially now.