

## MOTHERING SUNDAY OR MOTHER'S DAY

There is confusion between Mothering Sunday and Mother's Day observance in the Anglican Church. This arises because they are used interchangeably, but they have distinct origins and meanings.

### HISTORICAL DIFFERENCE

1. Mothering Sunday falls on the 4th Sunday of Lent. In England, it is a religious tradition—a time when people return to their "mother church" (the church where they were baptized and nurtured). It was also a time when domestic servants of wealthy households baked cakes or carried eggs to visit their home church and mothers. Over time, it became associated with honouring mothers as well.
2. Mother's Day falls on the second Sunday in May and is a secular celebration that originated in the USA. It was founded by Anna Jarvis in the early 20th century to appreciate mothers.

### ANGLICAN TEACHING

1. The fourth Sunday in Lent is referred to as *Laetare Sunday*, meaning a time when the Church takes a brief respite from Lenten practices. The Eucharist begins with the entrance antiphon: "*Rejoice, Jerusalem... Be joyful, all who were in mourning.*" (Isaiah 66). The Latin word *Laetare* means "rejoice." On this Sunday, priests wear rose-coloured vestments as a sign of joy.
2. *Mothering Sunday* is an Anglican Christian tradition that focuses on

spiritual themes such as returning to one's faith, the Church as a mother, and gratitude for both earthly and spiritual mothers. The liturgical celebration intentionally avoids the term "Mother's Day" to prevent confusion.

3. One way to reduce miscommunication between Mothering Sunday and Mother's Day is to explain their differences in sermons, bulletins, and announcements. Highlight how Mothering Sunday connects to the fourth Sunday in Lent and its historical roots.

### DIFFERENT WAYS OF CELEBRATIONS

1. Incorporate some local elements such as baking a cake—like the Simnel cake, (medieval fruit cake) which is historically associated with Mothering Sunday. (A pandan fruit cake or something equivalent) could be done to make it a special day. Traditionally, people give mothers flowers or even take them out for a meal. The main family dining table can be decorated with roses, or a rose plant can be planted in the garden as a lasting tribute.
2. Encourage church teachings to focus on "Mother Churches," spiritual motherhood, and the broader Christian family rather than limiting the celebration to biological mothers or mothers-in-law.

Ake can example from a Mother's Day celebration in the Anglican communion for example, Mrs. Angela Ndukuba, wife of the Primate of the Church of Nigeria in the Anglican Communion, spoke on the theme of *Ruth, the Virtuous Daughter-in-Law*. She urged women to emulate the biblical Ruth, who, after losing her husband, remained devoted to her mother-in-law, working hard to provide for both of them. Ruth demonstrated exceptional love and commitment to Naomi and chose to worship the God of Israel. As a truly virtuous woman, emphasized the importance of love and tolerance among family members and refer to Biblical women and celebrate how motherhood impact the family can community. Raise awareness how to carve out respect for them especially remembering single mothers and widows.

3. In Papua New Guinea, families visit the gravesites of deceased mothers, paying their respects and laying flowers as a symbol of remembrance and love. It is a time to reflect on the invaluable role that mothers play in shaping the lives of their children and the lasting impact they have on their families.
4. Local churches can express their love for Mothering Sunday by preserving and passing down the observance of Mothering Sunday. One meaningful way to do this is by highlighting and recording what the church normally does for this special day. By documenting stories of mothers—whether through

written records, photographs, or testimonials—churches ensure that future generations can continue to celebrate and honour mothers in a meaningful way. This not only strengthens the church community but also reinforces the importance of gratitude and love within the congregation.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGE MODERN ASSOCIATIONS WITH SENSITIVITY.**

1. Recognize that many people today have forgotten the true meaning of Mothering Sunday and instead associate it with Mother's Day, honouring not only mothers but also women and female individuals in congregations. The commercialization of Mother's Day has overshadowed the spiritual and biblical teachings that were once the hallmark of Mothering Sunday.
2. By all means, celebrate Mother's Day, but also strive to reignite the association with Mothering Sunday, emphasizing its religious significance in honoring mothers. This is a meaningful time to celebrate mothers while also reflecting on the deeper spiritual message.

#### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

1. At the formation of the Diocese of West Malaysia in 1970, the Diocesan Women's Conference was formerly known as Mother Union. However, in the 1980' that the name was changed to Diocesan Women's Conference. The change was to recognise the role of every woman in the formation of the church and

family. Then again what happened to the role of Mothers? Could there a special teaching or reignite Mothering Sunday within the Diocesan Women's Conference? It is good to ponder so that we may be properly aligned to biblical teachings.

By reinforcing these distinctions in teaching communication and celebration, the Anglican Church can help people appreciate Mothering Sunday' unique Christian heritage while acknowledging contemporary practices.

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Written by Bishop Charles Samuel

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