

THURSDAY PRAYERS

In Ely Cathedral March 2025

Zoom connection details.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85209298628?pwd=VDTrciGq12BVz8luyEa34M6BRLZDIK.1>

Meeting ID: 852 0929 8628

Passcode: 080127

Welcome to Ely Cathedral for our time of prayer together.

Focus this month in our Prayer Diary is “Giving Thanks for Mothers” but as we are in just the second week of Lent, I would like to broaden our thinking to what this time of Lent can mean to us.

The designated Reading is Isaiah 7:14

“The Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Emmanuel.”

As we know, that son was Jesus, and Mary would suffer the utmost heartbreak that a mother could face, the death of her son.

Mothering Sunday comes half way through Lent, that important festival in the Christian calendar, when we should be preparing ourselves for the events of Easter. We can only wonder at how much Mary knew of what was in store for Jesus, and if she too was preparing her heart for the future, for the difficult times he would face during the following years. Did she know of Jesus’ time of preparation in the desert?

Luke, in ch 4, tells us how Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was tempted by the devil who said, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

Picture this DESERT PLACE, a barren, rocky place, little if any water. A very difficult place to live.

This is where Jesus went to be alone before beginning his work for God, to prepare himself, to ask His Father to be alongside him in whatever life would throw at him.

We may not be living in a desert, but there may be times when we experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. We can be comforted in the knowledge that Jesus experienced that same isolation and loneliness as he prepared himself for the time ahead.

While he was in the desert, the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread for himself. He resisted that temptation but he did become known for feeding people who were hungry for food (he did feed the 5000!), or for love, for a word of encouragement or acceptance. His actions during his ministry show us what a truly caring life looks like.

It is part of the remit of MU to care for families in all situations. We do this as a group in our branches, or individually, by the actions we take through local projects, and also through our “Make a Mother’s Day” appeal. This appeal raises funds for our work to provide courses in parenting, leadership, literacy and many other ways of empowering women to improve the life of families and their communities.

Mothering Sunday gives us and our churches a chance to make contact with families in our communities, and those who no longer have family around them. May we be empowered to look out for those who might need that loving care.

While in the desert, Jesus would have seen the night sky alive with stars. When we look up to the stars, the expanse of the heavens makes us realise that we are just a small part of God's creation. Even so, each one of us is so important to God that he knows each one of us by name.

Jesus cared so much for us, and for the mission that God had given him, that he was preparing to give up his life as an atonement for our turning away from a righteous path. As part of our preparation for Easter, we should be looking for ways in which we can better emulate the life of Jesus in our relationships with those we meet every day.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is called the 'Light of the World', and he asked that we should be the light shining on the world, that light should shine through each one of us. How can we share the Light of Jesus with others? Can we reflect his love through our actions?

In our annual Prayer diary for this year, the reflection for March shows how women can be that light. It speaks to us particularly of women living in societies so very different to ours here in England, but helps us to understand what women can achieve. March is in many ways, a month for women as we mark International Women's Day and Mothering Sunday. Women once were deemed the weaker sex, yet so often they have an abundance of power and strength inherent in their very beings. Simply because of love! Women are also tender, gentle, nurturing, but in one of the world's great dichotomies, they are also strong, tenacious and courageous. Whenever the moment arises, it is often women who are at the forefront of calling to protect the innocent, defend the helpless and to stand resolute against injustice. As members of Mothers' Union, we are called upon to support such actions, and need to ask for God's help to fulfil our 'mission'.

I hope that the hymn that I have chosen will help us to feel the love and strength of a God who watches over us, through the good times and the bad. He is there to help us if we ask.

HYMN:

Lead us heav'nly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but thee;
Yet possessing ev'ry blessing
If our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us,
All our weakness thou dost know,
Thou didst tread this earth before us,
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;
Lone and dreary, faint and weary
Through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God descending,
Fill our hearts with heav'nly joy,
Love with ev'ry passion blending,
Pleasure that can never cloy,
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,
Nothing can our peace destroy.

We'll end our time together in prayer, first with the prayer for March in the Prayer Diary.

Father, we thank you that through the sacrificial love of Christ we have been shown the transcending and transforming power of love. Thank you for the unending grace and redemption found in his sacrifice. Thank you for his selfless sacrifice, which exemplifies the depth of your love for us. May we reflect his love in all we do. Help us to be people showing love for others through inclusion, forgiveness, compassion and social justice. In your holy name we pray.

Dear God, Creator of all things, we believe there is a purpose in everything that you have created. Help us to discover the purpose in all that you have created through the wisdom and love you have given us.

May you always be in the hearts of mothers so that they may raise your children with love. Let them overcome all the challenges they face with a kindness like yours as their children grow up. May they fall asleep every night with a thankful heart for all that you have provided for them. Amen

Lord, we pray for

The worldwide work of the Mothers' Union, our new Worldwide President Kathleen Snow.

The Chief Executive, Bev Jullien and for all those who work at Mary Sumner House, supporting members.

Our province of Canterbury and all the members of the Canterbury Province and our new Provincial President Comfort Fearon.

We pray for our whole Diocese, for our Diocesan vice-presidents, Jean, Debbie and Hazel, for those on the Trustee Board and those leading branches, our Branch Liaison Officers, our Chaplain, and all our members. May they feel your love and guiding hand in all they do for the work of Mothers' Union.

We also pray for the many countries around the world where there are troubles and people are suffering, our local parishes, our families, our friends, and anyone known to us who is in need or unwell.

We thank you Lord for our many blessings.

We remember and pray for our Worldwide Links:

Lusaka in Zambia; Shyogwe in Rwanda; Sokoto & Ikka in Nigeria; Karimnagar in India; Plus the Diocesan Links with Kigali & Vellore.

In our Wave of Prayer for today we also asked to pray for Antisiranana in Madagascar; Busoga in Uganda; Yola & Oke-Ogun in Nigeria; Algoma in Canada & Jabalpur in India

Let us say together the 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

The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of the Mothers' Union. We are Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Let us stand and close our time together by saying the Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy spirit, be with us all this day, and evermore. Amen