



## **Worship Service Theme: Mother's Day**

### **Helpful Elements:**

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

**Welcome:** Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time today.

Happy Mother's Day (today or coming up)! Who here is the child of a mother? (Yes, all of us 😊) Who here has cared for children or even pets during her life? Today we celebrate mothers ... and God's perfect love as our ultimate caregiver.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening Prayer:** Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

### **Opening Hymn: Doxology**

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Hymns:**

**For the Beauty of the Earth**

**Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee**

**First reading:** This is from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (66:12-13):

For thus says the Lord:

<sup>12</sup> “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,  
and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;  
and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip,  
and bounced upon her knees.

<sup>13</sup> As one whom his mother comforts,  
So I will comfort you;  
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**Jesus Loves Me**

**Oh, How I love Jesus**

**Holy, Holy, Holy**

**Second reading:** Mark 3:31-35. This is a story from the life of Jesus:

<sup>31</sup> And Jesus’ mother and brothers came, and standing outside they sent to Jesus and called him. <sup>32</sup> And a crowd was sitting around Jesus, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” <sup>33</sup> And Jesus answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” <sup>34</sup> And looking about at those who sat around him, Jesus said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> For whoever does the will of God, he or she is my brother and sister and mother.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

## Softly and Tenderly Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

**Interactive Homily:** Let's pause our singing for a moment and talk more about mothers and what mothering means to us.

- We can start with the reality that there's no such thing as a perfect mother. But in your best memories, what are some descriptive words you'd use to describe your mother, or any good mother figure?
  - Loving, kind, caring, hardworking, generous, funny, strict, no-nonsense, good cook...
- What sorts of things did your mother or mother figure teach you?
  - Manners, hard work, how to sew, how to read, family culture and background...
- Let's think a bit more broadly: Is motherhood only biological or within a "traditional" family?
  - For example, what kinds of women care for children that they didn't actually give birth to?
    - Foster moms, adoptive moms, neighborhood moms, teachers, aunts, grandmothers, older sisters
  - There are single moms who raise kids without the help of a partner
  - You can also "mother" (nurture, care for) friends or other family that aren't children
- And isn't it amazing that God used a human mother, Mary, to bring our Lord into this world? We can only imagine what mothering Jesus must have been like for Mary – the most lauded mother in the Christian faith.
- Mary is a good example of *spiritual motherhood*. What do you think that might mean? What do you think a "spiritual mother" would care about and do for you?
  - A spiritual mother is someone who cares about your faith, communicates how much God loves you, and helps you to know and love God better.
- Who was a spiritual mother to you, and how?
  - Could be a grandmother or godmother who prayed for you, a nun or Sunday School teacher who taught you about faith and God.
- Where do you think this quality of spiritual motherhood comes from? Who is our heavenly parent?

- God! The Bible attributes parental names to God: Father *and* Mother – because God embodies, even originates, a good mother’s qualities: love, care, nurturing, discipline, forgiveness, guidance.
  - Isaiah 66 passage: God “bounces us on [God’s] knee” 😊, comforts “like a mother”
  - God has always had us in the palm of his hand (even if our earthly mother may not have fulfilled her role well).
- Jesus says that whoever *does the will of God* is part of God’s family, is under the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God. Why is that? How do you act when you’re part of a family?
  - You act like one of the family; you bear the imprint of that family.
  - As children of God, we embody a good mother’s qualities toward others: love, care, forgiveness, etc.

... Let’s take a moment to silently pray and reflect on blessing of mothers, and especially the knowledge of God as our perfect, all-loving, protective parent.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

**Lord’s Prayer:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

**Hymns:**

**He’s Got the Whole World**

**Standing on the Promises**

**Third Reading:** Thoughts on Mothers

A teacher gave her class of second-grade children a lesson on the magnet and what it does. The next day in a test, the teacher included this question: “My full name has six letters. The first one is M. I pick up things. What am I?” The teacher found that almost half the students answered the question with the word *Mother*.

A little boy forgot his lines in a Sunday school presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it didn't help. Finally, the mom leaned forward and whispered the cue to her boy, "I am the light of the world." The child beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world."

A 4-year-old and a 6-year-old presented their Mom with a house plant. They had used their own money to buy it and she was thrilled. The older of the two children told their mother, "There was a bouquet at the flower shop that we wanted to give you, but it was too expensive. It was real pretty, and it had a ribbon on it that said, 'Rest in Peace.' We thought it would be perfect because you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest!"

G.K. Chesterton described mother's work as being surrounded "with very young children, who need to be taught not [just] anything but *everything*. ... Our race has thought it worthwhile to cast this burden on women in order to keep common-sense in the world."

### **Hymns:**

**Swing Low, Sweet Chariot**

**When the Saints Go Marching In**

**Fourth Reading:** "The Lanyard," by American poet Billy Collins<sup>1</sup>

The other day I was ricocheting slowly  
off the blue walls of this room,  
moving as if underwater from typewriter to piano,  
from bookshelf to an envelope lying on the floor,  
when I found myself in the L section of the dictionary  
where my eyes fell upon the word lanyard.

No cookie nibbled by a French novelist  
could send one into the past more suddenly—  
a past where I sat at a workbench at a camp  
by a deep Adirondack lake  
learning how to braid long thin plastic strips  
into a lanyard, a gift for my mother.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/billy-collins>

I had never seen anyone use a lanyard  
or wear one, if that's what you did with them,  
but that did not keep me from crossing  
strand over strand again and again  
until I had made a boxy  
red and white lanyard for my mother.

She gave me life and milk from her breasts,  
and I gave her a lanyard.

She nursed me in many a sick room,  
lifted spoons of medicine to my lips,  
laid cold face-cloths on my forehead,  
and then led me out into the airy light

and taught me to walk and swim,  
and I, in turn, presented her with a lanyard.  
Here are thousands of meals, she said,  
and here is clothing and a good education.  
And here is your lanyard, I replied,  
which I made with a little help from a counselor.

Here is a breathing body and a beating heart,  
strong legs, bones and teeth,  
and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered,  
and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp.  
And here, I wish to say to her now,  
is a smaller gift—not the worn truth

that you can never repay your mother,  
but the rueful admission that when she took  
the two-tone lanyard from my hand,  
I was as sure as a boy could be  
that this useless, worthless thing I wove  
out of boredom would be enough to make us even.

### **Hymns:**

## **Amazing Grace**

### **How Great Thou Art**

**[sing more or fewer songs to fill out the time]**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise**

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#### **Extra material:**

To My Mother, by Wendell Barry  
I was your rebellious son,  
do you remember? Sometimes  
I wonder if you do remember,  
so complete has your forgiveness been.  
So complete has your forgiveness been  
I wonder sometimes if it did not  
precede my wrong, and I erred,  
safe found, within your love,  
prepared ahead of me, the way home,  
or my bed at night, so that almost  
I should forgive you, who perhaps  
foresaw the worst that I might do,  
and forgave before I could act,  
causing me to smile now, looking back,  
to see how paltry was my worst,  
compared to your forgiveness of it  
already given. And this, then,  
is the vision of that Heaven of which  
we have heard, where those who love  
each other have forgiven each other,  
where, for that, the leaves are green,  
the light a music in the air,

and all is unentangled,  
and all is undismayed.