

Every day my inbox is filled with more messages. I can stay in a hotel, go to a restaurant, buy some clothes, some perfume, some books, visit a stately home, send flowers, buy flowers – and all because on March 10th it is Mother’s day. I feel exhausted and penniless at the possibilities! There is only one problem. I am not a mother, nor do I have a mother any longer.

It’s not easy being a childless, motherless vicar at this time of year. It can feel very lonely. There is a sense that everyone else is with someone they love or who loves them. But there are many others who feel mixed emotions on the day, or simply want to avoid it. I remember the couple who had just had yet another miscarriage, after the third round of IVF treatment. I remember the young man in his 20s whose mum had died in the previous year. I remember the woman of 92 whose son died suddenly aged 63. And the parents weeping because once more their child didn’t make it home for Mother’s Day, trapped in his life of addiction.

Church services – and church spaces – can offer a chance to do something different. It may be as simple as lighting a candle in the stillness of a country church or the sanctuary of a great cathedral. Or even lighting a candle online.

Some churches will include space to reflect in their Mother’s Day services. Alongside the flowers, the thanks and celebration there may be a place to recognise mixed emotion. In one service I led people placed a stone at the altar as a sign of their story and their prayer, whether for absence, grief, disappointment or anger, it didn’t matter. It was between them and God. Everyone took part. It was deeply moving. It was a great relief to many as we admitted the reality that for some Mothers’ Day holds pain as well as joy. For others it’s a long way from being pink and fluffy. Yes, it’s still a day full of treats, thanks and love, but it is also a day to face the realities of mothering.

I love(d) my mum. I love being an aunt, a godmother, a friend to a new generation. I love the God who has a mother’s heart for us all. And on Mother’s day I rejoice with families everywhere, praying for love to be strong, kindness to be abundant and hope to be real.

### **Canon Sandra Millar**

A Prayer for Mothering Sunday

Thank you God that you love each one of us.

Thank you for homes and help those who don't feel safe today.

Thank you God for all the people who work to take care of us every day.

Keep us close to your love each day.

Amen.