

# **Mothering Sunday**

**God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow, we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

**20 March** (*transferred from 19 March*)

## **Joseph of Nazareth**

God our Father, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph the carpenter to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary: give us grace to follow him in faithful obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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**20 March**

## **Joseph of Nazareth**

In the gospel of Matthew, Joseph is depicted as a good man, a working carpenter, who trusted in God. He received God's messenger who shared with him God's will for him and for Mary, to whom he was engaged to be married. Luke's gospel describes how Joseph took the new-born child as if he were his own. He was with Mary when, on the fortieth day after the birth, Jesus was presented in the Temple, 'where every first-born male is designated as holy to the Lord'. The adoption of Jesus by Joseph also established Jesus in the descent of David, to accord with the prophecy that Israel's deliverer would be of the House and lineage of David.

*Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'*

**21 March**

**Thomas Cranmer  
Archbishop of Canterbury,  
Reformation Martyr, 1556**

Father of all mercies, who through the work of your servant Thomas Cranmer renewed the worship of your Church and through his death revealed your strength in human weakness: by your grace strengthen us to worship you in spirit and in truth and so to come to the joys of your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate.

Amen.

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**21 March**

**Thomas Cranmer  
Archbishop of Canterbury,  
Reformation Martyr.**

Born in Aslockton in Nottinghamshire in 1489, Thomas Cranmer, from an unspectacular Cambridge academic career, was recruited for diplomatic service in 1527. Two years later he joined the team working to annul Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 and duly pronounced the Aragon marriage annulled. By now a convinced Church reformer, he married in 1532 while clerical marriage was still illegal in England. He worked closely with Thomas Cromwell to further reformation, but survived Henry's final, unpredictable years to become a chief architect of Edwardian religious change, constructing two editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, in 1549 and 1552, the Ordinal in 1550 and the original version of the later Thirty-Nine Articles.

Cranmer acquiesced in the unsuccessful attempt to make Lady Jane Grey Queen of England. Queen Mary's regime convicted him of treason in 1553 and of heresy in 1554. Demoralised by imprisonment, he signed six recantations, but was still condemned to the stake at Oxford. Struggling with his conscience, he made a final, bold statement of Protestant faith. Perhaps too fair-minded and cautious to be a ready-made hero in Reformation disputes, he was an impressively learned scholar, and his genius for formal prose has left a lasting mark on Anglican liturgy. He was burnt at the stake on this day in the year 1556.

*Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'*

## 25 March

### Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, Mary, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. [Alleluia.]

The Word of God, begotten of the Father before time began, humbled himself for us and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. [Alleluia.]

Mary received the word of the Lord and conceived the Word of life. [Alleluia.]

We beseech you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts that as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

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## 25 March

### The Annunciation of Our Lord

The story of the announcement of the coming of God made flesh in the person of his Son, Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One, is heard in today's proclamation of the good news from the gospel of Luke. The feast marks the conception of Christ in the womb of Mary and has been celebrated in the Church since at least the late fourth century. The perfect humanity and the complete divinity of Jesus is affirmed, following the controversies around those orthodox assertions, which themselves led to the acknowledgement of Mary as *Theotokos*, God-bearer, which in the West became translated as Mother of God. The celebration thus took on strong associations with the person of Mary, and became known in England as Lady Day. In recent years, the Church has re-affirmed the day as a Feast of our Lord, on which his virgin-mother still has a unique place of honour.

*Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'*