

SUNDAY 29—31 DECEMBER 2019

Reflection

Among the oxen (like an ox I'm slow)
I see a glory in the stable grow
Which, with the ox's dullness might at length
Give me an ox's strength.
Among the asses (stubborn I as they)
I see my Saviour where I looked for hay;
So may my beastlike folly learn at least
The patience of a beast.
Among the sheep (I like a sheep have strayed)
I watch the manger where my Lord is laid;
Oh that my baa-ing nature would win thence
Some woolly innocence.

C.S. Lewis

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2:19



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM ANGLICAN MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA



SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER 2019

Praise and worship

'I worship the ground she walks on'. He is proud of her but does he praise her? His statement is really all about HIM, what he feels, and how wonderful he is to be so appreciative. Worshipping God can sometimes really be about us. Beware of the "I" statements. The psalmist here knows his duty of praise and declares his intentions and goes on to extol God's mighty deeds. When we worship with Praise and Adoration we focus on the Other.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Psalm 146: 1-2

Love of community flows from the praise and worship of God which is the foundation of Mothers' Union in the Solomon Islands. Parenting and Literacy programs are well established there.

Thanks be to God.

SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER 2019

Imprisonment

Most of us take liberty for granted. And yet in our towns and cities in Australia prisons are overflowing with our brothers and sisters: God's beloved children who were born to the wrong parents, chose the wrong lifestyle, fell in with a gang, were criminalized, radicalized. Is there an unredeemable human being? Are we imprisoned by our need to feel safe and the idea that deprivation of liberty is for those not of our kind?

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Hebrews 13:3

Marital imprisonment may be resolved by divorce. Those women and children experiencing release from difficult relationships are assisted by Mothers' Union members in Brazil. They also work to improve family life where there is violence and abuse. With God's help members help break the isolation of domestic imprisonment.

SUNDAY 20 OCTOBER 2019

Overcoming poverty

Jesus said, 'Blessed are you that are poor'. (*Luke 6:20*). Why did he challenge the Jewish belief that poverty was a sign of God's displeasure or looked at another way, that riches were the rewards of the righteous? We know just how much we love shopping: in our society it is a sport, a diversion, and certainly what we deserve for all our hard work – and good fortune. We accumulate so much that in Adelaide Anglicare has asked for no more donations of clothes. Are we like Dives in the parable and are having all our goodies now?

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the needy, and executes justice for the poor. Psalm 140:12

With prayer at the heart of Mothers' Union in Scotland, members provide for the poor and needy. They collect items for women in prison and have handbags of goods to present on their release. Members are also concerned to raise awareness of domestic abuse.

SUNDAY 22 DECEMBER 2019

Christmas

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for Thee?
My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
The pasture is Thy Word; the streams Thy grace,
Enriching all the place.
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Out sing the daylight hours;
Then we will chide the sun for letting night
Take up his place and right;
We sing one common Lord; wherefore He should
Himself a candle hold. *George Herbert (1593-1633)*

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6



SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER 2019

Expectation

O Wisdom
dwelling in the womb of God,
generating and nurturing the earth
through the nights of darkness,
come and cherish in us the seed of wisdom

-Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 2.

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Jeremiah 33:15

Cyclones, climate change, HIV/Aids are among the challenges members in Vanuatu face along with drug abuse and lack of job opportunities for women. May Holy Wisdom shine in the hearts and minds of our members, especially in this Season of Advent.

SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER 2019

Light

O Morning Star
Splendour of Light Eternal,
O Radiant Dawn, O Dayspring from in High,
shining with the glory of the rainbow,
come and waken us
from the greyness of our apathy
and renew in us your gift of hope.

—Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 16.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. Isaiah 9:2

May the Light of Christ shine into the darkness of the vulnerable in South Korea's society. These 'little ones' are the focus of the support given by members. Orphans and the unemployed and homeless are given hope.

Thanks be to God.

SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER 2019

God's People throughout the ages

There is a boom of interest in family history. The Church's family history can be a great source of inspiration. The more we know where we came from the more considered will be our expectations and understanding of our faith and our Anglican tradition. Mary Sumner is just one of a great procession of women who ministered and held the faith in rocky times. From the Samaritan Woman at the Well and Mary Magdalene to the early virgin martyrs to wise teachers, Julian of Norwich and Margaret of Scotland. Find your hero and read her story

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1

We thank God for the faithful witness of Mothers' Union in Mozambique. We pray for the leaders who have developed skills and faith to enable them to continue the ministry of women in Jesus' name.

SUNDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2019

Diversity

What a challenge life in Christ is!!

As people from ALL over the world come into our country; as our children make life partnerships with those of other tribes and religions; as they choose of a same-sex partner; as they transition to the opposite gender – is this how we all shall stand before the throne of the Lamb? ALL God's children robed in white?

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9

Diversity is at the heart of Canada. It is both French and English speaking and a large First Nations' population. There are very few Mothers' Union members, but they are active in their diverse communities.

Thanks be to God.

SUNDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2019

Time to remember

The art of remembering is cultivated by repetition. It is also a gift from God: there is, deep within us, the capacity to connect with the past in such a way as to bring it to the present. This is the mode of speaking historically in Deuteronomy: 'A wandering Aramean was my father' (*Deut 26: 5-9*) and the Jews said to Jesus, 'Abraham is our Father' (*John 8: 39*). Speaking of remembering and belonging in the present tense particularly pertains to partaking of Holy Communion. Holy, spirit filled, and Communion, coming together in union with Jesus.

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

For most women in the Sudan, the task is to build good memories and heal the bad. As the second most gender unequal country in Africa, Mothers' Union has programmes to improve women's lives through literacy, prayer and bible stories. They are building new and hopeful bases for remembering God's love.

SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2019

Servanthood

In the old days a servant had an awful life. The worst would be the 'eyes down', then to do your work with no attention paid to YOU at all, as if you were a robot, or an animal and probably the dogs and horses were better treated, especially in Britain! You didn't own anything, have an opinion or feelings. If you were abused by the men of the house, you ended up disgraced and in the poorhouse or dying in childbirth. What was Jesus thinking? But then the Cross was what he was thinking; not honours for services to the community.

But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. Mark 10: 43-45

Members in Iraq don't have to look far to find those to serve. The destabilisation of the country and civil unrest has produced orphans,



displaced families and widows. In Baghdad 1% of the population is Christian but members are tirelessly helping the poorest, and children to know the love of God. Praise the Lord.

SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2019

Challenging gender-based violence

Violence against someone of the opposite gender signals a belief that that person is an inferior being, is of a lower order of creation. It can also be assumed that the perpetrator also believes that animals and every living thing on earth is also 'available' for rape and pillage. But that is another discussion. Although for Christians the primary texts are Genesis 1: 28 and 1 John 4:8 – the God created male and female in God's image and that God is Love. God is our Loving Creator. If we Christian live and speak this, we can with all authority challenge gender-based violence.

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Proverbs 31:8

As members in Sri Lanka focus on empowering women and marriages, they intend to act with love and compassion in a non-judgemental way as Jesus did, putting prayer and listening to God at the centre of their work.

SUNDAY 1 DECEMBER 2019

Season of advent

O Living Word

proceeding from the mouth of God,
penetrating to the ends of the earth,

come and pierce us with the sword of truth

—Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 1.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Isaiah 52:7

Members in Namibia are living sacraments of Jesus' love and compassion. They are at the interface of need in their communities 'bringing physical and spiritual comfort'.

Let us praise the Lord for the faith of our sisters.