

SUNDAY 28 MARCH 2021

Holy week

It's not easy observing Holy Week in Australia in March. The divine weather in Adelaide lures us outside with calm and sunny days, calm and warm evenings, the Festival etc. Up north, floods ravage the land, bushfires on the west and east coasts have left destruction. Pleasure and pain, personal and communal, leave no time or inclination for Devotion. Charles Williams, a contemporary of CS Lewis, advocated the bearing of one another's burdens. Let us who can, serve others with prayer, reading, washing feet, reliving the Great Days until the joy of Easter.

... the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28

Mothers' Union members live to serve as Jesus served: tending the poor and oppressed, binding up the broken in body, mind and spirit. May each member take time during Holy Week to consider their motives and intentions, look earnestly at their way of life and resolve to serve rather than be served.



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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK FROM MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA

FRIDAY 1 JANUARY 2021

rejoice and reflect

Rejoice the Lord is King, Your Lord and King adore,

Mortals give thanks and sing; And triumph evermore. C Wesley

To re-joyce is to be joyful again and again and again. And to rejoice is to keep on remembering our Christ-centred happiness, our love of Love given so freely. If the season of Chris's Mass has brought sadness or trouble, try to remember the simple gift – a refugee baby in a smelly stable, a weary family trekking away from its homeland to escape persecution. We're trained in Hope and Trust. We can re-joyce.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Romans 12: 15

We pray for all members: May God be with them, may they persist in rejoicing. May they rejoice together and weep together. May they give thanks and sing. May they share in the hope of triumph - the life of Christ divine and human.

SUNDAY 3 JANUARY 2021

Vision for the future

“ Now is the time to make justice a reality to all of God's children”. I have met people who know Martin Luther King's ‘I have a Dream’ speech off by heart. This line from that speech creates a heart-aching yearning that continually echoes when television footage of abuse and injustice invade and appal my senses. We are all God's children and we all deserve respect and love and tolerance and opportunity and forgiveness. Let us in Mothers' Union dream and work for equality, so that our actions glorify God and God's presence be found in our consideration of all God's children.

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually. 1 Chronicles 16: 10-11

In the countries in Southern Africa all parts of the Body suffer, those who are robbed and fear violence, those displaced, under financial stress, out of work who often resort to violence and robbery. Thembsie, the Trustee for Zone E, prays, ' Please heal every human being and reveal that each one of us is made in your image, Lord.'

SUNDAY 10 JANUARY 2021

Mothers' union worldwide

The Philippians lived amid the bustling of traders and travellers passing through between 'Italy' and 'Turkey'. It was probably like any large shopping centre: noisy, full of cheap/expense stuff, tempting. It's a big and ever-present task to be blameless and innocent in the midst of consumer envy, promotional ladders – for the Philippians – and us. Mothers' Union as an organisation is as subject to perversions as any other so it behoves each member to hold fast to the Word of Life, to honestly examine their motives and thus to shine like a star.

May you be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. Philippians 2: 15-16

Vicoba is a Credit and Savings programme in Tanzania. All MU Vicoba groups report that members are primarily using their loans to start small businesses that benefit their families. We give thanks for this initiative and pray that those participating remain blameless and innocent in their dealings like stars.

SUNDAY 17 JANUARY 2021

Christian fellowship

How many times have you heard the snide comment, 'See these Christians, how they love one another'? How many times have you experienced dis-fellowship? We Christians are frail human being and subject to worldly temptations, perhaps even more so, than our fellows who do not profess Christ. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians serves as a reminder that it was always thus, but that we need to stop ourselves in our disruptive traps, with God's help.

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Corinthians 13:11

Helen, from the Anglican Cathedral in Zanzibar, practiced Christian Fellowship when she took out a loan from Vicoba. She used it to dig a well at her home accessing fresh water to fatten livestock and grow vegetables. Additional income from this business was used to access health insurance for her group and their families. Peace and love abound when resources are shared.

SUNDAY 14 MARCH 2021

Mothering

Lord Jesus, think on me, When flows the tempest high:

When on doth rush the enemy O Saviour, be thou nigh. TiS 546; AHB 122; NEH 70

A mother confided on social media that she resents her toddler. A mother believed that she was the person who know best for her child rather than God. The tempest of confusion, love, loss of self, demands of others, assault those whose role is mothering, whether male or female. But the enemy, neglect, rushes to confuse, not just the drug-addicted but the asset-hungry, the career-driven.

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. Isaiah 66:13

The role of Mothers' Union is to promote the role of mothering. The prophet Isaiah has defined it as comfort, an enfolding word, a wrapping-in-the-arms word. Com-fort means held-together. Let us all help our children by imaginatively using ways to hold them together, being Christ to them

SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2021

International matters

Lord Jesus, think on me, that when the trial (flood) is past, I may your radiant glory (the eternal brightness) see, and share your joy at last. TiS 546; AHB 122; NEH 70

The hymn we have been reading through Lent was written in Greek by Synesius of Cyrene c.370-c.414. His writings "breathe a sincere spirituality" with a knowledge of the human condition. They remind us that matters between nations are dealings with sisters and brothers. They remind us of our connectedness through time, across continents and onto eternal brightness.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. Isaiah 61:11

Let us give thanks for The Anglican Communion, a family of brothers and sisters worshipping and serving Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the tradition of the Church of England. And let us give thanks for the Mothers' Union Worldwide, blossoming and working for families internationally

SUNDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2021

Women of influence

Lord Jesus, think on me, Amid the battle's strife;

In all my pain and misery Be thou my health and life. NEH 70

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 200 years ago and became the Mother of Feminism. Many abused and ill-treated women as well as the talented, but thwarted, would want their right to a fulfilled life vindicated and plead to the Lord Jesus for health and life. All women, great and small, influence those around them for good or ill.

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates. Proverbs 31: 30-31

It is the ministry of Mothers' Union members and all Christian women to offer nurture and encouragement wherever possible. As Sheran, world-wide president, points out, 'the work of MU ... is bringing lasting transformation'.

SUNDAY 7 MARCH 2021

Spiritual growth

Lord Jesus, think on me, nor let me go astray;

through darkness and perplexity / point to (thou) the heavenly way.

TiS 546; AHB 122; NEH 70

Spiritual growth is quite amazingly like any other growth: stealthy, not subject to observation, doesn't respond to command or regulation. It is decidedly contrary: for example, if you were to say, "I've taken three steps towards the heavenly way over the past month", you could be in dire danger of being led astray by your own self-assessment and of then proceeding down a very sticky path indeed.

... so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:10

Mothers Union members gather in prayer when in darkness and perplexity so that spiritual growth is Christ centred and free of worldly assessment.

SUNDAY 24 JANUARY 2021

Heart for the poor

There's a physicality about Christianity that means heartfelt generosity must be coupled with action. What is felt in the heart is also to be felt in the pocket and in the muscles. The poor must be fed, visited. The poor are our neighbours, when we live nearby, when we clean and wash, sacrifice ourselves, our souls and bodies. They are Christ. 'When I need a neighbour, where you there?', Sydney Carter wrote paraphrasing Matthew 25:31ff. Mothers' Union members are to be neighbours: heart, soul and body.

*Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full. Proverbs 19:17*

In the diocese of Down & Dromore, Nth Ireland MU connects with church programmes for the vulnerable and isolated. Children normally fed meals at school, are hungry during the holidays so hot meals are served. A camp on the green has free packed lunch and fun exercises. There's school uniform recycling. Poverty is real and relative. The love of Jesus is shared.

SUNDAY 31 JANUARY 2021

Light of the world

Christ whose glory fills the skies,

Christ the true, the only light,

Sun of righteousness arise,

Triumph o'er the shades of night:

Dayspring from on high, be near:

Daystar, on my heart appear.

Contemplate each line of Charles Wesley's hymn; learn it by heart; say it morning, noon and night until it instils its wisdom within your very being. Then join with Simeon as Christ is with you and your eyes see Our Lord's salvation.

*"for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentile and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2: 30-32*



The MU in Ringmer, Sussex, UK has provided a light for young single mothers in Rwanda, who had been abandoned by their families. The Light of Christ shone in members' heart when they a of the mothers' plight. Treadle sewing machines (90 UKpounds ea.) would enable the mothers to make and sell goods and be able to feed their children (and themselves). The Light of Christ was glowing in Ringmer as news of the project and a coffee morning on its behalf raised 2,000 UKpounds!!! Praise the Daystar.

SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2021

Stable relationships

“Whatever you do, don't rock the boat”. This is just one of the many relationship tactics we could employ to maintain a stable relationship. It is a means that will not necessarily achieve harmony. The passionate musician, the creative child, the workaholic husband will all need kindness, forgiveness and tenderness in order to work with their God-given gifts. As God has created us to be instruments of his glory so every relationship needs to bend and sway with the needs of the other.

... be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

Mothers' Union members maintain stability by accepting changes such as the new title PRAYER DIARY. It was *Families Worldwide*. A priest friend said that the Mothers' Union PRAYS and the new cover proclaims this fact, adding that it is UNITING MEMBERS IN PRAYER AROUND THE WORLD. Let us all pray for the grace to accept others as they are, God's beloved children.

SUNDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2021

Lenten reflection

*Lord Jesus think on me, And purge away my sin;
From earth bound passions set me free, And make me pure within.
TiS 546; AHB 122; NEH 70*

Ashes are a powerful symbol of destructive power. Where bush fires have raged the remains of the living are as dust. Ash is a bitter symbol of what is lost, destroyed. Ash Wednesday begins our Lenten reflection on what is lost, betrayed, corrupted, misplaced, broken in our lives. Only with honest self-reflection are we able to see our petty selfishness, greed or cheating and acknowledge the destruction it has caused. Sin is loss, a gradual erosion to dust and ashes. Only by waiting, trusting and hoping will we have the strength to face our truth.

*Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.*

*Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.
Psalm 33: 20-22*

Sheran, world-wide president of Mothers' Union, suggests 'keeping aids to prayer within reach or next to your comfy chair'. This may be the MU Prayer Diary or a birthday book. You may even use an address book (sure to get one on sale at the newsagent). You can write in friends and family and sundry others so you remember them day by day, letter by letter. These are ways to 'strengthen our connection with God and each other', especially in Lent.

SUNDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2021

Fair Trade issues

Lord Jesus, think on me, by care and woe oppressed;

Let me your loving servant be, and taste your promised rest. TiS 546; AHB 122; NEH 70

Giving someone a 'fair go' is an Aussie virtue and it is VERY Christian. Jesus Christ preached and taught that the generosity of God is boundless, unfettered by tribal and national and religious convention. The more we care for others, the less oppressed we will be by the restrictions of convention. How we act for the benefit of others is a challenge that requires an effort to purchase goods that will bring dignity and worth to the makers whether in the next town or a village in another continent

The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice. Proverbs 13:23

Self-reliance is one of the three MU global themes. People's ability to build self-reliance depends firstly on opportunity. Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo have difficulty owning property and/or growing a business because of low literacy rates. MU ran its Christmas appeal to increase their opportunities in education and self-reliance.