

Rural Reflection No 1, Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020

## Mothering Sunday

Today is Mothering Sunday. Churches across the country will have planned special services to celebrate Mothering Sunday. Such plans came to abrupt end this week when we received notification that all public worship is suspended in our churches due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Many of us will miss gathering together on this special Sunday. I love the opportunity that this day brings to collectively give thanks for our mothers. One of my favourite traditions is distributing posies of flowers on Mothering Sunday. This morning I would usually be saying these words of blessing over the posies before children distributed them to their mothers,

*Bless, O Lord, these flowers, that they may be given with love and thankfulness and received with joy. May they be symbols of the love that we share with one another, and may they be pledges of God's continuing love for us and for all creation.*

As I recalled those words, I had something of an epiphany! As everything changes beyond imagination in our everyday routine, nature continues. Amidst all the closures, the countryside remains open. Amidst all the advice to cease our usual activity, we are being positively encouraged to walk outside. Walking in the countryside, offers wonderful opportunities to sense that the natural world is awakening all around us. Trees are coming into leaf. The dawn chorus is a wonderful cacophony of birds full of the joys of spring. The brown winter earth is beginning to sprout with green plant-life ready to emerge in to the spring sunlight.

Whatever happens in our daily routines, we can step in to the countryside and be affirmed that through the wonders of the natural world, God pledges his continuing love for us and for all creation.

Throughout last week, I found myself repeating, Julian of Norwich's well-known words, 'All shall be well'. I find them especially reassuring because Mother Julian argued with God on receiving the words in a vision! How could 'all be well' amidst the pain and suffering of this world? But in the vision, God was adamant, 'All shall be well'. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, these words of hope have transformed the lives of thousands of people.

If you are able to take a daily walk in the countryside, you might like to truly open your eyes and ears to the beauty of the natural world. Sense its momentum and its determination to carry on relentlessly towards summer flourishing. Whilst we can't gather in churches at present, God, through the wonder of creation, might be telling you that, 'All shall be well.'

Revd Canon Janet Nicholls  
Rural Adviser and Agricultural Chaplain