



A SERVICE OF HOPE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE

GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

SENTENCE OF SCRIPTURE

I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.

(Psalm 34: 4)

GREETING

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you all.

And also with you.

We are gathered as followers of Jesus to worship God, to pray together for Mothers' Union branches throughout Ireland as they prepare to re-open, and to re-commit to the Aim and Objectives of Mothers' Union.

Often when we gather, there is joy and celebration, but sometimes we are sad and need to ask for God's healing and strength.

And so we pray:

God of our days and years,

we set this time apart for you.

We bring before you our joys and our sorrows.

We place them into your hands

and ask that you heal and restore us,

so that our lives may glorify you. **Amen.**

In darkness and in light,

in trouble and in joy,

help us, heavenly Father,

to trust your love,

to serve your purpose,

and to praise your name;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Your word is a lantern to my feet

and a light upon our path. *(cf Psalm 119: 105)*

O Lord, your word is everlasting:

it stands firm for ever in the heavens. *(cf Psalm 119: 89)*

Let us then receive the word of the Lord.

so may the light of your presence shine into our hearts.

PSALM 121: 1-2, 7-8

My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and for evermore.

My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

THE FIRST READING,

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH, 3: 21-26 – THE SONG OF LAMENTATION

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in him.'
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

God speaks to us through his Holy Word.
We praise his holy name.

He comforts and sustains us.
In him we find true healing and peace.

The Lord guards us and guides us.
Even when we are worried and downhearted.

A short period of quietness for personal reflection

PLACING OUR HOPES WITH GOD

Psalm 71: 5-6

In you, O Lord, do I seek refuge
for you are my rock and my fortress.

For you are my hope, O Lord God,
my confidence, even from my youth.
Upon you have I leaned from my birth,
when you drew me from my mother's womb;
my praise shall be always of you.

In you, O Lord, do I seek refuge
for you are my rock and my fortress.

THE SECOND READING

LUKE 24: 13-27 - THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

God opens our hearts to his Holy Word.

We praise his holy name.

He walks with us when we are anxious or sad.

And hears us when we journey through difficult times.

The Lord is our refuge and strength.

He is our strength and our shield.

A short period of quietness for personal reflection

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, we are bold to pray:

Our Father,

who art in heaven:

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory

for ever and ever. Amen.

A candle is lit

We light this candle to remind us

that the love of God is like a light in our darkness.

Blessed be God for ever.

A short period of quietness for personal reflection

RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT TO THE AIM & OBJECTIVES OF MOTHERS' UNION

Jesus called his disciples to follow him,
and to do the work of his Kingdom.

He sent them out to do his work in the world,
and promised them his love and his peace.

Jesus said, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. *(John 14: 25-27)*

ACT OF COMMITMENT

The aim of the Mother's Union is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life.

Do you renew your commitment to this Aim?

I do, with God's help.

The Objects of the Mother's Union are:

- to uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding;
- to encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church;
- to maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service;
- to promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children;
- to help those whose family life has met with adversity.

Do you renew your commitment to these Objects?

I do, with God's help.

Will you be faithful disciples of Christ?

By the help of God, we will.

Praise be to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

The minister says

Almighty God,

you have given us the will to do all these things:

give us the courage and strength to achieve them to the honour and glory of your name, and the good of your Church and people;

through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith,
that you may be rooted and grounded in love
and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. **Amen.**

A short period of quietness for personal reflection

GOING OUT AS GOD'S PEOPLE

A PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:

Go before us, Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favour, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name, and finally by your mercy attain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

MOTHERS' UNION PRAYER

**Loving Lord,
we thank you for your love so freely given to us all.
We pray for families around the world.
Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through
the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.
Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in
love and service reach out as your hands across the world:
in Jesus' name. Amen.**

THE DISMISSAL

**The Lord be with you
and also with you.**

**Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.**

THE BLESSING

**May God give you his comfort and joy, his healing and peace;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you always.**

**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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