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| **All Age Mothering10 March 2002** |
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| Does anyone know what day it is today? I don't mean Sunday - I mean Mothering Sunday. Hands up if you've done something nice for your mum today? (Elicit views). Well if you haven't done anything yet, the day is still young and you've got plenty of time. Sunday lunch still has to be prepared and then there's all that washing up and I'm sure there's washing and cleaning that needs doing! Mothering Sunday is the day when everybody waits hand and foot on Mum and she has to pretend she doesn't mind the extra work!Does anyone know how the tradition of Mothering Sunday started? Well it goes back many centuries to the days when most grand houses had servants. The tradition developed that on the fourth Sunday of Lent, just before the great celebration of Easter when all the servants would, of course, be required to be in attendance, the servants were given time to go home and visit their families, to worship at their Mother churches and pay their respects to their mothers. As they walked home, they would stop and gather wild flowers and present their mothers with a posy.How nice it would be of that was what we still did today - gathered a few wild flowers and presented a little posy to our mothers. But now, Mothering Sunday, or Mother's Day as the Americans would have us call it, is big business. You can't have failed to notice the bombardment of recent weeks as you open a newspaper or magazine or walk down the High Street. Cards, flowers, chocolates, books, perfumes, cosmetics, clothes, hats. The list is endless. All of the things that you should be buying your mother if you were not such a skinflint. We are embarrassed into translating our love for our mothers into tangible form and as a by-product making someone somewhere a nice tidy profit. I am as guilty as the next man - or guilt free, depending on your point of view. I dutifully ordered my bouquet of flowers for my mother to be duly delivered to her doorstep yesterday by some unknown person at the other end of the country. No wandering down leafy lanes picking wild flowers in this day and age. Meandering 200 miles down the M6 to visit my mother this morning could not be recommended and the wild flowers are few and far between.No, in the 21 st century, the only wandering I needed to do was to my computer to place an order with Tesco. Highly convenient but hardly as personal as the Victorian idyll. I was highly amused this week as I was thinking about this talk and wandered into a greetings card shop in Runcorn where I work. One wall was full of Mothers Day cards and there in the midst of quite a few people leafing through this sea of dayglo pink cards were a couple of lads who you would not want to meet on a dark night.They would never have normally been caught dead in that shop and certainly never with the saccharine sweet Barbara Cartland creations in their hands but here they were, these hard lads queuing up to buy their Mum's cards. That got me thinking that, in spite of all the 21 st century commercial trappings, our motivation for going out and buying cards and flowers and chocolates and whatever is just the same as the motivation for those young servant girls stopping to pick their posies. All are motivated by love. Love for their mothers created by the love that their mothers have for them.It is an amazing thing, the love of a mother because it has no boundaries and no conditions. I once heard a quote that was something along the lines of "Never mind the power of a 100 horse power car, if we had 100 mother power, it would be the most wonderful force in the world."And it is this love of a mother for their child that I want to finish on because we all know what that love is like. We know it to be entirely trusting and trustworthy. We know it to be unconditional and absolute and we know it to be safe and secure. This is so valuable for us as Christians because it gives us some inkling of perfect love - so hold that thought. Imagine that feeling of your mother's love. Imagine the comfort that you can draw from it and now imagine that God's love for us is even greater than that.God's love for us is so great that he gave his only Son to die for our sins. As we prepare for the agony of Good Friday and the ecstasy of Easter Sunday, hold that thought of a mother's love in your mind and imagine the love that God has for you. **Tom Crotty** |

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